

TWENTY FOUR
S E R M O N S

Preached in the
CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF

R O C H E S T E R,

On SOLEMN OCCASIONS.



VOL. I.

A



THE
SERMONS

CATHEDRAL CHURCH

ROCHESTER

OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH

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Preached in the
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OF
ROCHESTER,
On SOLEMN OCCASIONS.

BY
The late Rev. JAMES HALES, *A.M.*
Vicar of CHART-SUTTON, in KENT.

In TWO VOLUMES.

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TWENTY FOUR

S E R M O N S

CATHEDRAL CHURCH



ASSOCIATION

ON SOLEMN OCCASIONS

THE REV. JAMES HALL

OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH

TWO VOLUMES

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L O N D O N

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SERMON



S E R M O N I.



ROMANS I. 31.

Without natural Affection.

THE tender sentiments that were
T originally implanted in rational
Beings, — the situation they were
placed in, and their necessary dependence
upon, and friendly intercourse between each
other, do all conspire to lay so strong and
lasting a foundation for the happiness and
good government of the world, as would
make it incredible that it should suffer any
considerable alteration as to its first frame
and constitution. The Divine Creator, to
shew his regard for social happiness, when
he had “formed man from the dust of the
“earth, and breathed into his nostrils the
“breath of life,” looked upon his work as
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incomplete, till he had, by another supernatural act, given him a Companion and Partner of his felicity. The pleasures and delights of Paradise, whilst he was there *alone*, would have terminated only in a pleasing consciousness of his happy situation; his dominion and superiority over the other creatures would still have debarred him the happiness of communicating his thoughts to, or conversing with them. The variety of fruits, and his observations on the vegetable world, might have indulged his appetite and employed his curiosity: — And here might have centered the whole of his employment, the whole of his happiness for many ages. Under these circumstances, notwithstanding, he might have continued without offence to his Maker; yet, in the judgment of infinite Wisdom, "it was not good" for man to be *ALONE*." But as God intended him for the enjoyment of higher degrees of bliss, so he was willing to try his Gratitude for what he had already done, and his Obedience to what he should enjoin him; after he had given him "an help meet" for him." And though she proved the unhappy instrument of their disobedience, and

and brought upon him a *Curse* instead of a Blessing; yet it was some atonement of the guilt, some comfort to him in his trouble, to reflect, that the unhappy cause of them, was still with him, — A Partner in *Remorse* as well as *Disgrace*. How great would have been his affliction, if he had sinned alone, and had been turned out into the wide world, with the inseparable remorse of guilt, and without any of his own species to have conversed with? This, to be sure, was the only mitigation that the guilt of *Adam* was capable of; and the continuance of it was greatly encouraged upon God's gracious Promise to *Eve* immediately after the fall. This was a fresh engagement to *Adam* to be tender of her, as well as to be careful of, and affectionate to his Offspring. And though the footsteps of their sin pursued them in the punishment of their *First-born* for the murder of his *Brother*, (permitted, to admonish them, probably, what should have been their fate, upon the violation of a command of their Maker;) yet, we are informed, that they were afterwards blessed with a numerous offspring, which was to transmit the promised Seed to future generations.

What I would infer from this imperfect History of our first Parents, is the natural tenderness and affection they observed towards each other after the fall; and how the divine Wisdom seems to labour as it were to reconcile the *Animosity* it might have occasioned, by that gracious Promise of a REDEEMER; who would be a mean, after their natural life, of translating them to a greater glory than that of an earthly Paradise.

In this account we are furnished with one of the highest reasons for resentment, considering *Adam's* situation, that any History can parallel. Happy when he was *alone*;—happier still when he was with *her*, while they continued innocent. To him the injunction was given;—*His* the chief care to communicate it to *her*;—to remind her of the continuance of their present happiness, upon their observance of it; and of the misery that would inevitably succeed upon the breach of it. After so much good advice and precaution, *Adam*, we may be sure, could not but conceive great hopes of her Integrity, both from a natural regard and affection

affection she must needs have for him ; as well as from a consideration of her being a sharer in the same happiness.

One would imagine, in such seemingly *secure* circumstances, any attempt that could have been made upon their innocence must have proved abortive ; and that it had been impossible for any stratagem to succeed. And therefore what must exceedingly add to the surprise of any one, is, that when *Eve* was first solicited by the Tempter, after her bare mentioning the ill consequence of her compliance ; her whole attention to her *own* and *Husband's* happiness, was quite lost in the fallacious arguments and delusive promises of the Tempter. Besides, it was an aggravation of a very high nature, for her, who had received such *early* warnings from *Adam*, not to have consulted him, at least, in an affair of such moment and importance. His previous consent and approbation would not only have been an extenuation of her offence, but it would have left no room for after-upbraidings. — But her taking upon her to act by *herself*, independent of her Husband, in an affair of such consequence, denotes a *superior*, as well as *criminal* confidence in her own judgment

ment and opinion. The temptation which lay before her could not be of so alluring a nature as not to admit of this consideration; neither could the apprehension of his *refusal* of it be a sufficient reason to induce her not to consult with him about it. But however, it was thus, at the expence of the violation of a Divine command, and the forfeiture of her own innocence and integrity, she greedily grasped at That, which, instead of unlocking her *senses*, or convincing her as the Tempter assured her, she should become a God, served only to demonstrate her own fatal error, and the unhappy alteration of circumstances, which she was just upon the brink of plunging into.

But there is yet another circumstance in this History which, in my opinion, may be looked upon as a farther aggravation of her offence, and consequently must serve to increase *Adam's* repentment; and that is, after she had submitted to the temptation herself, and was deceived in the promised event of it, she still persisted in *Adam's* repeating the same Sin and Folly. As if it was necessary that, as they had been Partners in happiness,

they should now become Sharers and Companions in misery : or that her disobedience could have been no otherwise veiled, than under that of her Husband's. Sad and deplorable consequence of Guilt !

But however, bad as it was, it was now unattended with some gracious effects of pity and forbearance. The immediate infliction of Death was suspended to a great distance of time ; and though the earth they now inhabited did not abound with that plenty and variety that Paradise afforded, yet it was not left *wholly* incapable (provided they made use of their own labour and industry) of producing what was necessary to the convenience and support of life. Things however grievous to be borne at first, by long use and experience became *easy* and familiar to them. Their mutual converse and endearments, though they often revived the remembrance of their lost estate, proved their utmost happiness and consolation in this. The increase of their Offspring, naturally begot an increase of tenderness and affection ; and the Labour of the Father, as well as Care of the Mother, was abundantly

dantly recompensed with the pleasing consciousness of having discharged their duty as Parents; of having left behind them a numerous Offspring to convey the promised Seed, and of being received, after a long and painful life in this world, into Glory and Immortality.

This small sketch of the History of our first Parents, shews how very difficult it is to deface those natural impressions of Love and Affection we bring with us into the world; or to hinder their flourishing with our constitution, or exerting themselves in the execution of their respective dictates to all mankind. And indeed, considering that, next to our own immortal happiness, we are born for the mutual assistance and friendship of each other, one would not imagine there could be a single instance, amongst reasonable creatures, of a contrary disposition. It will be worth our while therefore, in the sequel of this Discourse, in the *first* place

To inquire into the secret spring from whence this depravity of Nature arises.

Secondly,

Secondly, I shall observe the extensive mischievous effects of it. From thence I shall proceed, in the

Third and last place, To offer some directions as well to prevent the continuance of it in Those who are so unhappy as to be under its influence, and to keep others from ever pursuing its dictates or submitting to its practice.

And *First* then, I am to inquire into the secret springs from whence this depravity of Nature arises.

Here therefore, at our first setting out, it may be requisite to keep in our memory the epithet which the Apostle joins to the temper of mind we are now speaking to: "without *natural* Affection." Which intimates to us, that it is a disposition not originally acquired by Education, Friendship, mutual Intercourse, or Society; but that it is something pre-existent to all these, that it is rooted in our very natures, and coeval with our being. And therefore we cannot trace the origin of this evil too near to its fountain;

fountain-head, considering the general corruption and wickedness of the world.

Children who are so unhappy as to be the descendents of Parents of a merciless and wicked disposition, long before they come to any tolerable maturity of judgment, are apt to imbibes such prejudices from the example of those who are immediately intrusted with their care and education, as makes it very difficult to correct or reform. Our early notions of what we see frequently practised by others, we look upon as a guide and instruction to ourselves; and the nearer relation we stand in towards *them*, the greater is *their* influence upon our own behaviour. Besides there is this unhappiness in a corrupt example of the persons we are now speaking to, that it carries with it the force of superior Knowledge and Experience, and consequently, is apt to operate with greater vigour upon our inclinations. In our young and inconsiderate years, we must necessarily depend upon something for our guide and support. And who so proper as those from whom we derive our nature and being? Who, besides the common sustenance of
our

our persons, are intrusted with the great care and improvement of our morals. And to engage this care as effectually as may be, the Divine Wisdom has so contrived it, as to make a man's Offspring not only a considerable portion of his happiness in this life, but likewise to assure him that *they* "are an *inheritance* and *gift* that cometh of the Lord." That besides the bare felicity of being Parents, they have it in their power, by a suitable instruction and example, of directing them to shun the common vices of the world; and teaching them, "as Abraham" "did his children and his household after" "him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do" "justice and judgment." This is generally the happy consequence of a righteous Parent; the contrary effect too often shews itself, that "where the root is corrupt, so" "are the branches."

It were needless to pursue this argument any farther, or to multiply instances to evince from whence all those Vices, which the Apostle enumerates immediately before and after the Text, should be the inseparable attendants of those persons, whose dispositions

fitions are so deplorably perverted, as to be utterly "void of natural Affection;" because this will be more pertinently argued under my *second* Particular, wherein I proposed to observe to you the extensive mischievous effects of an unnatural Affection.

The first and most obvious one is apparent in our early converse and society, when our age, not our morals, qualify us for companions. And perhaps in this scene of life we may be capable of doing more harm, than if our years were farther advanced. Children are seldom suspected to bring any evil habits abroad with them, but what the correction or discipline of a School may reform. And perhaps this observation would have more weight with it, if Parents, who are careless or wicked themselves, would leave them entirely under its correction. But this is seldom the case: They are sent, indeed, as others are, for Doctrine and Instruction, but generally their first care is to contract an acquaintance, and teach them to be as wicked as themselves. A Youth, who is not influenced by the tender sentiments of Nature, and under an awe
of

of God and Religion, will not in the least hesitate to corrupt the morals of others; and though he should not succeed in his first essay, it will be no discouragement to him to repeat his attempt. He will, it is to be feared, if he is industrious, soon make some Profelytes, and so elude the piety and care of *their* Parents, as well as bring shame to his *own*. This observation is too often verified in practice to need a proof. As to any amendment in his *own* conduct, it can scarce, without a miracle, be expected. The hours which are spent at School may furnish him with some useful knowledge, but it very rarely goes so far as to correct or reform his morals. This must be the work of those who are intrusted with his *early* Education; and if, through a criminal fondness or carelessness, it should be neglected, and bad impressions suffered to take place, no plea of tenderness, with regard to *his* age or constitution, will be an atonement for so scandalous, so unnatural an omission.

It were to be wished, that all who have the happiness (for a *happiness* I must call it) of being Parents, would duly reflect upon
their

their own early Education. Those who have experienced the happy effects of parental care in their younger years, and retain in their memories the pious counsels and admonitions of their parents, should think themselves under the highest obligations of transmitting the same to their Children, and let no opportunity slip of improving them to their advantage. As to others, who have improved under bad patterns and examples, there can be no room for any admonition. The dangers they have escaped under such an Education, as they have been sufficient *Warnings* to *show*, so they must of course administer useful lessons of instruction to their posterity. When a man is so happy as to be advertised of his danger, and by that means to escape it, he must be a monster to suffer his *Fellow-Creature*, without giving him previous notice, to fall into it. I am sorry I have any occasion to mention this, much more so to see the affectionate care and piety of our Ancestors expire with them. We are, when we become Parents, Heirs to those *Duties* which were once incumbent upon them; Children are born to us from the same channels

nels of generation, and equally demand our natural Affection and Regard. The Law indeed secures to us the inheritance of their *temporal Estates*, but, what is much to be lamented, Religion with all its encouragements, cannot entail upon us their Piety and Virtue.

But this is not all; for, in the *second* place, another mischievous effect of this want of natural Affection, shews itself when Children come to appear upon the stage of life; when they are of age to leave their parents, and take upon them the office and duty of Servants.

It is the unhappiness of too many, to compound for the necessary care of an early Education of their Children, by having recourse to that of their neighbours; and the miscarriages which arise from the remissness of others, serve to patronize those of their own. They would not be thought to affect singularity, for fear of being esteemed too severe Taskmasters, or of restraining from them the common indulgence which is due to *their* tender years, and from their *own* relation. Hence it is, that they are doted upon

upon in their Infancy, fondled and careſſed in the Youth of their underſtanding, and permitted to travel on through their Age of puerility, without any notable rebuke or reſentment from their Parents. The trifling errors of their minority are eaſily overlooked; theſe are eſteemed only as leſſons of neceſſary experience, which will be a direction to their future conduct in a more mature age. With theſe ſad accompliſhments they are intruſted to come abroad into the world, where every particular of their conduct will come under an impartial obſervation. And how can it be thought their behaviour under theſe circumſtances, ſhould ſuffer ſuch an alteration, as to be able to acquit themſelves with Honour and Reputation? The odds are ſo great between their good and ill ſucceſs, that nothing but the imprudent confidence of Parents to ſuch an Offspring can account for it. The Maſter and the Father are upon a quite different footing; the Youth is a Servant to one, though a Son to the other. The Maſter accepts of him upon his Parent's aſſurance of his qualifications, and upon requiſite conditions, adopts him into his family. He very candidly for
a while

a while labours to instruct him in the duty and business of his calling, and finds him either quite awkward or obstinate. He is careful of using severity, and does not exert his authority till a farther trial and experience. He has recourse to the natural reflection of his long indulgence at home; and hopes that time will bring him to a better sense of his duty. But yet, when *this* is sufficiently expired, he has the unhappiness to find little or no alteration in him for the better. Thus he goes on, to their mutual dissatisfaction, till the Master's patience is succeeded by a just resentment, and he is returned to the place from whence he came. This is the most favourable issue we can form from so criminal, so dissingenuous a disposition. And where this is the case in one instance, it is abundantly worse in an hundred.

But we will suppose a youth with these qualifications should make a shift, through the Master's unusual candour and forbearance, to rub through his servitude, and to be intrusted to act for himself; what must be the consequence of such a procedure?

If in the quality of a Servant he could not be persuaded to attend upon the duty of his Calling, if the kind directions of his master, or his employment in his business, were always irksome and unpleasant, how can it be expected there should be an alteration for the better, when he comes to take upon him the office and calling of a Master; or, in other words, when all his affairs are under his own bad management and direction. And therefore, *thirdly*, to that part of his

Another mischievous effect of this "want" of natural Affection" shews itself when he comes to appear upon the public stage of the world, when his age and experience put him beyond the apology of Friends, the heat and inconsideration of Youth, or any other natural infirmity.

The time that is generally spent in servitude; with regard to the sundry callings and professions in the world, one would imagine should unavoidably qualify every person to make a proper use of their respective vocations. And really considering the good ends proposed by it, and how mankind are inter-
rested

rested in them, it were needless to have recourse to any other incentive or encouragement. Every one cheerfully in this case submits to a state of Servitude, for the sake of knowing how he may conduct himself in a state of Freedom and Liberty, and is excited to exert his utmost care and diligence as a Servant, that he may be the better qualified to act and behave as a Master. It is so necessary, as well as useful a time of probation, that it is scarce possible any one should acquit himself, especially in these scenes of life, as he ought, without it. Or, after having passed through them, that he should come out into the world without that requisite knowledge and experience it generally inculcates.

But even where an instance of this nature happens, we are not to impute it to the difficulty of the Profession, the forwardness of the Master, or the inability or want of apprehension in the Servant, but to the criminal error and carelessness of the Parent. And where this is the case, the Son's neglect of due information during the time of his servitude, is, perhaps, not so much as suspected, or at best very easily overlooked.

His having gone through the stipulated time will be an uncontrollable argument, that he is perfect Master of his Business. And therefore the next eager care of the fond Parent, is to furnish him, raw and unaccomplished as he is, with requisite materials, for his appearance in a different station of life; where his abilities will too soon discover themselves to the discerning world; and where, perhaps, it may be too late for good advice to interpose. For, besides the want of competent knowledge to improve what is committed to his trust, (which is very bad of itself) he is open to such a variety of temptations, as will be next to impossible for him to shun and avoid.

A person who hath indulged such a sottish inadvertency as hath quite rendered him incapable of a due acquaintance with his own affairs, cannot reasonably be supposed to make any considerable improvements. The qualifications that are requisite in Trade and Commerce, should have been his attainments while he was a Servant. Not only a due knowledge of his own Business, but an amiable and obliging address to all mankind.

To the fatal omission of these necessary accomplishments he is first imposed upon, and over-reached himself, and then he awkwardly endeavours to impose upon and deceive others. He does not consider his own want of capacity, or how much he is exposed by it to the artful dealings and contrivances of other men; but vainly fancies, by virtue of these experiments, he is sufficiently qualified to return them. He has not the prudence to be adverted by these lessons of instruction, and so guard against a repetition of them; but such is his disregard for God and Religion, such is the effect of his Folly and Perverseness, that he earnestly labours by his practice to pervert that universal Rule of Justice, *not* by "doing to *others* as he " would they should do to him;" but by doing *what* others do to him.

This is generally the first mischievous effect of ignorance and unacquaintance of affairs with regard to civil life. The immediate consequence of which is, loss of Character and Reputation. It is in Trade as in every other Calling of life. Those who enter upon it without suitable qualifications,

are only contriving to make themselves ridiculous; and the contempt of the world, in the character that I am now speaking to, is generally followed by a looseness and depravity of Morals. For when men cannot make any tolerable figure or improvement in those scenes of life, in which they imagine they have gone through a regular discipline and probation, it is very natural for them to have recourse to other expedients. They are unable to reconcile the advantages and good success of other men, in the same dealings, with their own decrease and ill success. They fancy themselves as knowing and intelligent, and therefore cannot help imputing other mens superior success in business to some *unfair* or *indirect* practices. Upon this groundless and uncharitable imputation, they are easily prevailed upon to have recourse to the like expedients; the frequent repetition of which, is generally succeeded by the entire forfeiture of their character, as well as the loss of all their Trade and Commerce.

And when they are thus stigmatized by the world, they are under an unavoidable necessity

necessity of contriving other methods of shifting. They have still in their eye, even in the lowest and most iniquitous scenes of life, some instances of success, that are a sufficient encouragement to them to expect the like. They do not suffer themselves to reflect, that, if they were not able to support themselves in an honest and creditable employment, wherein centered all their Knowledge and Experience, that they must be the less qualified to hope for success from a contrary application. They are, if I may be allowed the expression, so judicially stupid, that, neither the consideration of their past misconduct, nor the disgrace and punishment that will sooner or later overtake them in their present career, can possibly affect them. Thus after a short time spent in these circumstances, a Goal, or some other more shameful event, puts an end to all their pursuits.

This is so common and necessary a consequence of a want of natural Affection, or due care of an early Education, that it were needless to produce arguments to confirm it. There are as many other mischievous effects of this

this careless and negligent disposition, as there are varieties of circumstances or relations in life. I have selected this, from a great many others, to evince the wretched and deplorable consequences of so criminal a neglect. And though perhaps what has been observed in this Discourse may not be attended with suitable impressions, upon a persuasion that this either has not been, or is not our own case; yet before I conclude this Head, I must (to do justice to my subject) distinguish between a natural *Fondness*, and a true natural *Affection*.

Most people are apt to think they have sufficiently discharged their Duty to their Children by a parental tenderness to their persons, and by having provided for them in the best manner they were able. The consciousness of their care of them in their Infancy, their affection for, and indulgence to them in their Youth, and their careful provision for them when they come of Age to shift for themselves; afford them, at least, the pleasing reflection of having done *their* Duty, however wanting their Children are to themselves. All this is indeed very natural

ral for Parents to conform to. But if this Tenderness to their Persons is unattended with a due care of the Improvement of their Morals; if the child must be perpetually indulged, and never chastised; the solid part of natural Affection is quite lost in the shadow of it; and paternal Duty, in this sense, deserves no other name than that of paternal Folly. Seasonable Discipline and Advice, in order to form the manners of our Offspring, is of infinitely more importance both to ourselves and them. It is a singular earnest of the Divine Affection to try his favourite children with severe chastisements and afflictions, in order to make them proof against the common Vices and Temptations of the world. And shall we be sparing of necessary Precautions, or even of the Rod itself, when the application of it may be of the most signal service to *them*, as well as satisfaction to *ourselves*?

However persons may argue against a strict vigilance and severity in this case, they will not, cannot be able to excuse themselves upon a neglect of it. They will too late be sensible of this criminal omission,
and

and all their apologies with regard to their childrens Age, or their own Tenderness, will be to no purpose. Thus much I thought necessary to premise before I entered upon my *third* and last Particular,

Wherein I proposed to offer some Reflections as well to prevent the continuance of this want of natural Affection, as to encourage others from ever pursuing its dictates or submitting to its practice.

The first Rule therefore that I would recommend to those who have been too indulgent to their Offspring, and are sensible of the bad effects of it, is, a speedy alteration of their method of behaviour. And though it may be difficult to reform their Errors, or correct their bad Habits, to which we ourselves have given a long encouragement and indulgence, yet we are to consider, that this is a burden of our own procuring; and therefore we should think ourselves obliged to labour earnestly to prevent the increase and ill effects of it. When we perceive that our Fondness produces little else but Perverseness and ill Nature; and that the requital

of

of all our Tenderness and Affection ends in undutifulness, it is high time to lay aside the ill-judged *Clemency*, and to assume the just *Authority* of the Parent; and if they do not know their own Duty and Distance, to have it properly inculcated into them.

And however severe the discipline, however unexpected the alteration may seem, after so long and different a treatment; we must, if we would truly discharge *our own* Duty, or promote *their* Happiness, be careful in the due enforcement of it. And when we have once entered upon this resolution, we must take care, that neither our *own* relation nor *their* tender years, help to evade the just execution of it.

We are to consider, that all ill Habits are contracted by a repetition of acts, and they must be lost or destroyed by a repetition of opposite ones. And though in the frequent exercise of this Discipline, we may have reason to reflect upon ourselves as the great occasion of it, as having omitted it too long, and suffered other Vices to take place; yet neither the reflection on our past Indulgence,

genes, nor the sympathy our present severity will naturally occasion, should tempt us any longer to suspend it. This is the natural punishment of a Parent's neglect of the early care of his Offspring. What he might with the greatest ease have effected in his tender years, he now perhaps finds to be a very difficult and irksome task.

However, such is the nature of punishment, such is the terror and impression it is apt to leave upon tender minds, that there is no great fear, upon a seasonable application of it, that it should be unattended with wholesome and suitable effects.

But here I would not be thought to recommend the Rod as the only instrument of reformation in this case. Many an ingenuous Youth may be argued into his Duty and good Manners; and so, though he may unwarily commit "things worthy of stripes," he may have occasion but for *few* stripes. Remonstrances, where they are attended to as they ought, should always make a part of the Penalty; and it should be the Parent's chief care to furnish himself with proper

proper arguments to convince the Mind, as well as suitable punishments to chastise the Body. A proper mixture of these can hardly fail; and therefore, as all Parents are supposed to be the best acquainted with the tempers and complexions of their respective Children, as it is their greatest Duty, next to that to God, so I hope they will duly and effectually apply it.

I have been so full under this Direction, that I think there is little or nothing left of any weight to offer farther to those persons, who have unhappily neglected the early care of their Offspring, and so far have been "void of that natural Affection" I am now speaking to.

I shall therefore proceed, *secondly*, to offer a Caution or two to those who have never pursued its dictates, or submitted to its practice.

Throughout this Discourse I have all along confined myself to that part of natural Affection which is due from Parents to Children; and, considering the scope the subject affords

affords me, together with the great importance of it, I hope I shall not be thought inexcusably tedious. I have given some imperfect accounts of the mischievous effects of the want of it; and I am to conclude this Discourse with some of the Blessings which attend the due observance of it. Two of the greatest arguments that can be urged to deter us from the omission of the one, as well as to excite us to a careful and vigilant discharge of the other.

And *first* then, let it be remembered by those who have been careful to "bring their Children up in the fear and nurture of the LORD," that they are preparing them to guard against the common attacks of the world, and qualifying them the better to behave when they arrive to their own future management. And therefore no opportunity of Advice or Correction, considering the small portion of time they are subject to it, should by any means be omitted. It is very natural for Parents to wish for and desire the welfare and prosperity of their Children, and it is as naturally incumbent on the Children to do all in their power to render

der those wishes and desires as effectual as may be. They must not sit down under the slender experience of a promising genius or disposition, and always flatter themselves that their behaviour is the same, both out of, as well as under their inspection. This will soon betray them into such a confidence of their regularity, that no complaints, however just, of their future behaviour will be attended to. And when a Child has attained to this subtilty of deceiving the Parent, nobody knows what may be the consequence of such an imposture. Every Indulgence of this nature, however inherent, ought by no means to be made known to them. The proper forming of their Morals should intirely supersede our tenderness and favourable prejudice to their Persons. We should consider that their behaviour will not for ever be subject to our favourable decision, and it should be our care to qualify them for other and more severe judges. If they carry nothing abroad with them but the Tenderness and Indulgence of the Parent, they will bring nothing home but *Complaints and Uneasiness*. And really where this is the case, the Parent must take the
blame

blame upon himself; he must accuse his own conduct, and impute this unhappy consequence to his own Folly and Fondness.

It is too great an alteration of circumstances to expect a Child will acquit himself as a Servant, where he has not been early acquainted with his duty as a Son. A Parent therefore can never be too careful with regard to the education of his Offspring, or too strict in his Authority and Discipline. His ears should be open to the *Complaints* against as well as to the *Commendations* of his Children, and he should never suffer the latter to get the better of the former. Every vicious tendency in them should meet with a just reproof, and every evil action a punishment peculiar to the nature of the crime. The strict observance of this method of Education can only make happy Parents and dutiful Children; and when they part with them, they have little to fear from their future conduct. They quit their home as a School, where they have been prepared and instructed for that scene of life into which they are now entering. Their behaviour engages the same encouragement and

and good treatment they there experienced, and the loss of the Parent is sufficiently repaired in the kindness of the Master.

With this encouragement they pass through the time of their Servitude without the least stain to themselves, with the highest approbation and applause from those to whom they were intrusted; and carry home with them the much deserved success of paternal Care and Piety; unblemished Honour and Reputation.

But, *thirdly*, there is still another Caution behind, which I would not willingly omit to recommend to those who have given a commendable proof of a careful Education of their Offspring; and that is to beware of expressing too great an Indulgence, or of entertaining a greater Affection for one Child more than for another. For besides the wrong application of this Tenderness, there are so many ill effects which proceed from it, as upon due consideration, must serve very much to discourage the practice of it. Children, however distinguished by Person, Features, or Apprehension, are
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equally intitled to our favour and regard. Nay, so far it is our duty, that where we find an uncommon dulness of apprehension, there our care ought to exert itself in a more assiduous application of all the methods of Information. Where we are so unhappy as to be the Parents of a maimed or distorted Offspring, it should be incumbent on us, if our circumstances will permit, not only to let the Child share our more than ordinary love and care in this life, but to make suitable provision for it before we ourselves are summoned to give up our last Account. This, indeed, is a Fondness, a Love highly just and laudable ! and those who have carefully observed it, will have the satisfaction of reflecting, that they have duly discharged this great, this weighty part of their Stewardship ; and that, in that particular, they have followed the example of their great Creator, who " has compassion on the ignorant, is a " helper of the friendless, and rich in mercy " to all those who call upon him."

This therefore is no part of the Caution that I am now upon, it is no more than what is our necessary Duty ; and the observance

servance or neglect of it, will most undoubtedly prove a considerable addition to our Piety or Demerit, and consequently to our Reward or Punishment in another world.

But the Fondness, the criminal Fondness that I would here guard against, is the centering the whole of our care, the whole of our affection upon one or two Children, when there are several others who have an equal claim to our love, and on whom we are equally bound to bestow it. No reason arising either from the circumstances of person, genius or apprehension, can be a just excuse for our partiality. These are only accidental Accomplishments, and should be so far from begetting in us any self-admiration or conceit, that they should really excite our Gratitude to Heaven for these Gifts of Providence, and our daily Supplication for Grace in order to a proper application of them.

But here I would not exclude the inward complacency which every Parent must naturally conceive upon so promising a prospect

as the aforementioned good qualities in their Children ; but I would have him so far cautious, that his Fondness or Admiration does not get the better of his Understanding and Judgment ; that his whole Affection is not captivated or ingrossed by one or two, when it should be equally divided amongst several tender objects.

No one, I am persuaded, that has been in the least acquainted with the fatal consequences of such a behaviour, can admit of any plea for, or be a tolerable advocate in behalf of it. For besides the unnatural Indignation and Resentment it is apt to beget in the minds of Brethren, it too frequently abates and enervates true filial affection. The History of *Joseph* must be recent in every one of our memories ; and though the good old Patriarch might not expect so calamitous a result from so trifling a distinction as that of a " parti-coloured " coat to the Son of his old age," yet we find that this gave so great offence to the rest of his Brethren, that upon the first opportunity they consulted on methods to destroy him. And though Providence so far mitigated

gated their resentment, as not to be his immediate executioners, or to suffer him to expire in the pit they had cast him into; yet they did not in the least scruple to dispose of him for a sum of money to the *Ismaelites*; esteeming his absence and captivity equally the same to them with the loss of his life. And when they had finished this piece of their contrivance, to what stratagems had they recourse to conceal it from their venerable Father? Why, the very coat that gave them all this uneasiness, was made the instrument to persuade him of their innocence; They brought it to their Father under a pretended uncertainty whose it should be. They remembered, indeed, that their Brother *Joseph's* was something like it, but whether it was the same or not *He* [the Father] must determine. O painful sight! as well as heart-breaking determination! And the blood of the Kid (sad confirmation of what he suggested) must be the blood of his dear Son *Joseph*; and the natural conclusion was, that "an evil beast had destroyed him."

The time will not permit me to make any farther reflections upon this useful part of

sacred History. I shall therefore recommend it to your serious perusal; hoping, that when you have duly weighed all the circumstances of it, it may prove a powerful and lasting direction to you to behave impartially to your respective Children: To let Virtue and Religion have the first place in your Education of them, and to enforce them by your own good Patterns and Examples. By thus acting we shall be happy instruments of putting a stop to the growth of Wickedness and Corruption, and of increasing the number of those who are patrons of Piety and Virtue; — of making ourselves useful Members of the Community; — of being honoured and revered by our Children; — beloved and esteemed by our Neighbours; — and, of leaving a grateful Memorial behind us when we go down to our Grave in peace. Which blessed and desirable disposition in this life, as well as happy consequence of it in the next, may God of his infinite Mercy vouchsafe to us all for JESUS CHRIST'S sake. To whom, &c.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N II.



LUKE IX. 62.

*And JESUS said unto him, No man
having put his hand to the plough,
and looking back, is fit for the
kingdom of God.*

THE observation contained in these
words is occasionally introduced
by our blessed Saviour. A cer-
tain person, who had attended him
from *Samaria*, and probably had been an
eye-witness of some of the Miracles he had
wrought, makes a voluntary offer of fol-
lowing him whithersoever he went. What
should induce him with so much seeming
zeal to devote himself thus inseparably to
CHRIST, may be easily conjectured by the
answer he meets with from our blessed Sa-
viour: "The foxes have holes, the birds of

" the air have nests, but the Son of Man
" hath not where to lay his head." With-
out doubt he would have been applauded
for his zeal, and presently admitted as a
Companion and Disciple, if the great and
wise Searcher of hearts, to whom he ad-
dressed himself, had not discovered some
particular motive upon which this offer was
grounded, which was utterly inconsistent
with a duty of this nature. Thus, having
intimated by this answer, in the audience of
several people, what they were to expect
who should become *followers* of him; in
order to try how well disposed they were to
put in execution that indispensable condition
of forsaking every thing that was dear and
valuable to them, for the sake of attending
upon that more material and important
concern the Word of life, the Religion of
the holy JESUS, he bids a certain person,
one of the company, follow him. He does
not, it is true, absolutely refuse this invita-
tion. He excuses himself indeed as to im-
mediate attendance by urging the necessary
and natural concern he was under for a Fa-
ther, whose age and infirmities required his
immediate presence and assistance; and that
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when he was discharged from this duty by his death and burial, (which in course of time could not be long) he would then very readily obey the summons.

However reasonable this excuse may seem in other affairs of life, yet it was objected to in this by our blessed Saviour. It may at first sight appear rigid indeed, that a Child should be forbid to pay the last kind office (as it is in this chapter expressed) to a tender and indulgent Parent. But this was not the case. The Parent, according to the opinion of most Commentators, was still living, and though the word *bury* is made use of, yet that may denote likewise all that interval the Son might be supposed to attend upon the Father to the time of his Interment. Besides, another reason to support this opinion of the Father's not being actually dead, is this; If the Father had been dead, the conduct of the Son had been very indecent, as well as unusual, in being absent from his own, or his Father's house. For the Jews were very strict in observing the Rites which were in use both before, and after the time of their friends interment.

ment. The season which was set apart to condole the loss of a Friend before Burial was incessantly observed. And after sepulture, the year following, with all possible respect and veneration. So that the death of the Father at this juncture, does not seem at all credible. But admit he was, the time that was spent in the execution of these funeral Solemnities would have been dangerous, and one thing or other might have intervened to prevent his return. The most tender concern in this life should weigh little with a man when his eternal interest is at stake. Would it be prudence in any one that labours under extremity of pain, and is for ever subject to distempers and infirmities, which he is sure will have no other period but in his death, to refuse to submit to an experiment that will infallibly give him ease, because some little smart or anguish may attend it? Can it therefore be unreasonable to expect that this young man should not have overlooked all this world's good, all his little precarious interest and concerns in this life, when the Saviour of the world, he, that was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, said unto him, Follow me?

me? Can it be deemed cruel or unmerciful; yea, rather may it not be supposed to be one of the highest instances of clemency, after so trifling an excuse, to endeavour to retain him still in his service, and press upon him that divine and important commission of preaching the Kingdom of God? "Let the dead bury their dead," that is, those that are dead in trespasses and sins; "but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God."

Upon this, "one of the company," from an apprehension, probably, that our Saviour would address himself to him next, by way of anticipation says, "Lord, I will follow thee; but first suffer me to bid them farewell that are at home at my house." An excuse much of the same nature with the former. This person, and the other, probably, had left their families upon the same of Jesus, in order to be certified in the truth of those things, which were every where so confidently reported of him. And therefore when they had satisfied their curiosity, and seen some Miracles done by him, they were, to be sure, lifted up into a belief that he must be some extraordinary person

person by these supernatural acts. However, it is very evident that their Faith did not operate so far as to engage them without any reluctance or excuse to follow him. Indeed the first of them desired that he might be constantly with him; but upon CHRIST's assuring him, that neither his present nor future condition in this life would flatter his hopes, or answer his expectations, it is highly probable he was discouraged from it. The second pleads a sort of duty which he pretended he then lay under to his father, which he might easily have performed afterwards, without making that the impediment for his not accepting so gracious an invitation. The third said that he would very willingly attend him, but he must first go and take leave of his family. All which excuses are rejected by our blessed Saviour, and condemned as utterly inconsistent with that temper and resolution of mind which should attend those who have taken CHRIST's yoke upon them; or, as it is expressed in the text, have set their hands to the plough, and resolve to persevere to the end of their journey. And therefore, in the prosecution of this Discourse, I shall observe to you,

First,

First, What we are to understand by the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, I shall as briefly as I can explain to you the meaning of that allusion of "setting our hand to the plough;" and,

Thirdly, I shall proceed to shew how inconsistent it is, when we have this, to *look back*; or, as what is truly intended by this similitude, apostatize from the Faith we have professed. "No man having put his "hand to the plough, "and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

First, I am to observe to you what we are to understand by the Kingdom of God.

Holy Scripture is no where so full and expressive of any one point, that bears any relation to our duty, as in this particular sentence, "The Kingdom of God," or which is all one in signification, "The Kingdom of Heaven." And if we consider the several Applications of it, we shall not,

not, as the literal sense of the words imports, be induced to think that Heaven, or an eternal Kingdom, is here meant, but only a temporal one: Though it must be confessed, that the one is productive of the other; and if we do our endeavour to attain the one, the other will necessarily ensue.

The Kingdom of God, which we must here understand to be the Kingdom of the Gospel, that is, those several Virtues which it points out to our imitation, must first be acquired, and carefully practised, before we can reasonably expect to be admitted as members into his Kingdom Triumphant. We are indeed, properly enough speaking, members of the Kingdom of God, but it cannot be supposed to refer to his Spiritual, but to his Evangelical Kingdom. The first is a promissory reward, stipulated under certain conditions in the second; without the performance of which conditions, we cannot possibly be stiled *lively* or *true* members of his temporal, much less of his eternal Kingdom.

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That this is the true meaning of these words, may easily be proved from that passage in the conference between our Saviour and *Nicodemus*, where he tells him, "that
" unless a man be born of water and of the
" Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom
" of God." Where it is very plain that he speaks this with reference to his Evangelical Kingdom. The two principal Branches of Christianity are couched under those two words, *the Water* and *the Spirit*. Water-Baptism is figured out unto us as an initiation into his Covenant; and by the Spirit, how they ought to live who are become thus regenerate, and made his Children by adoption.

For a farther confirmation of which proof it will be requisite to mention the Parable of the Householder, to which our Saviour likens the Kingdom of Heaven; "the Kingdom of
" Heaven, says he, is likened to a man that
" sowed good seed in his field, but while men
" slept, his enemy came and sowed tares
" among the wheat, and went his way."
Where it is very evident, he speaks this with reference to his Evangelical Kingdom. For
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it would be highly absurd in us to think that Heaven, the seat of the ALMIGHTY would admit of an enemy or a rival; that the members of that glorious Kingdom, who are ever employed in repeating their Hallelujahs and Songs of Praise to the Lamb, and to him that sitteth on the throne, sleep away their time, or indulge themselves in any one evil that should cause an alteration in those undefiled regions, and occasion a mixture of good and bad spirits; all which is evidently implied in this Parable: So that we must understand by the word *Houſholder*, the Son of Man, who came upon the earth to bring glad tidings, and to ſow good ſeed in the world. Which when he had effected, he left mankind to work out their own Salvation, to fight againſt the wiles of their grand Adverſary the Devil, who is continually ſowing his tares among the wheat, and traversing up and down, " ſeeking whom he " may devour."

Thus in almoſt all the parabolical representations of our Saviour, where the Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned, is intended the future ſtate and ſucceſs of the Goſpel.

Thus

Thus likewise when the divine Preacher entered upon his ministerial office, he opened his commission with these words; "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand;" that is, a new and more perfect scene is now to be displayed, wherein will be introduced a Religion the most agreeable to our nature, and perfective of our best faculties; wherein, likewise, we are assured of a Happiness, upon the performance of the conditions upon which it is promised, large as our wishes, and lasting as our souls.

I could mention many other instances of Scripture to prove the abovementioned sense and meaning of the words; but, I hope, what I have already observed may serve as a sufficient proof of this particular, and what we are to understand by the Kingdom of God.

I shall now proceed, in the *second* place, To explain the meaning of that allusion of "putting the hand to the plough."

This particular expression, as I best remember, occurs in no other part of holy

Scripture, so that we cannot have recourse to that for its explication. The sense of it, however, is so obvious, that it cannot easily be misapplied, if we observe only upon what occasion it is introduced. We have already, in the foregoing particular, observed to you what is to be understood by "the Kingdom of God," and, if we bear that in mind, the meaning of this other expression of a man's "putting his hand to the plough" will evidently appear to be this. That after he hath made himself acquainted with the Gospel Covenant, and hath been so far wrought upon by the conviction of his Reason and Conscience to give his assent to the Doctrines of Christianity, he voluntarily offers himself to be solemnly admitted into that Profession, with a mind suitable to such an undertaking, and a hearty resolution to live in conformity to those sacred and important obligations he hath put himself under. Thus much must necessarily be presupposed in the case of adult persons that offer themselves to the Church to be baptized, which is the case parallel to that in the Text. Whether the person who made the excuse which occasioned this expression was baptized,

or not ; or whether our blessed Saviour declared him unfit, because he postponed this great concern to that of taking leave of his family ; whether he intended it as a reprimand for his having a retrospect to worldly affairs, when he had undertaken a work of a different nature ; or as an admonition in case he should, may be matter of difficulty to determine. However, the term here made use of, of " putting the hand to the plough," may and doth very fitly denote a serious resolution (after admission into the Church by Baptism) to fulfil all the Duties for which we enter into so solemn an engagement.

And this brings me to my *third*, and last Particular, wherein I proposed to shew, how utterly inconsistent it is, when a man has done this, to *look back*, or, what is truly intended by this similitude, to *apostatize* from the Faith we have professed : " For no man " having put his hand to the plough, and " *looking back*, is fit for the Kingdom of " God."

The nature of the Christian Religion is

such, that no man can expect to partake of its Rewards, that does not fulfil the conditions by which they are to be obtained. Now we are certain the Gospel Institution does not admit of the least intermission of Duty, much less a total failure and desertion of it. It is a concern of such a nature, that, in order to make our Calling and Election sure, requires us always to be upon our guard, to be sober and vigilant, and to be continually conversant in good Works. For otherwise our "Lord may come at a time" when we look not for him, and in an hour "when we are not aware," and notwithstanding our former good conduct, he may appoint us "our portion with the Hypocrites, where" will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This consideration, one would imagine, should encourage us to the strictest perseverance in our Duty, there being no other method whereby to secure our everlasting Happiness, than being found finally, that is, when it shall please God to take us to himself, in such a state.

But here I would not be understood to assert,

assert, that a constant and uniform course of Obedience, and such as admits not of the least interruption of Sin, is the only and indispensable condition of our salvation: No; For it is very possible that a man may err from his duty, and afterwards, by the Grace of God, recover himself, and return to it again. Some particular parts of his life may be shadowed by failings and omissions, which his future Faith, accompanied with works of Piety and Goodness, may make amends and atone for. But still, while he is in this jeopardy, while he is under the dominion of Sin, some accident or other may intervene, and prevent all possibility of a recovery. And therefore our blessed Saviour, to guard against a relapse of this nature, by the answer in the Text admonishes all those that desire to take his yoke upon them, to examine themselves very strictly how their affections stand as to this world; that when they come to put their hands to the plough, they may be very intent on the work they are engaged in, and not suffer the affairs of this life to call them off, or hinder them in their religious pursuits. "For no man, says he, having put his hand to the
E 3 " plough,

" plough, and looking back, is fit for the
" Kingdom of God."

Indeed, one would think there could be no particular occasion for this admonition now. The nature of the Gospel Covenant being such, that to those who are initiated into it by Baptism, and made acquainted with the terms and conditions of it, there are so many intimations interspersed throughout it, of an entire dedication of our whole heart and soul to God, and of an absolute surrender of our wills and affections to him. This being almost the only and indispensable condition by which that glorious Promise of " an eternal Inheritance with the Saints in " light " can possibly be hoped for or obtained.

Without doubt, this intimation was principally intended for those who had entertained an opinion, that when the Messiah came he would appear in a splendid manner, and establish his Kingdom by an universal conquest. It is too evident that this was the case of one of the persons who offered to enlist himself in his service. And therefore,

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to undeceive him, our blessed Saviour assures him, that whatever private motive or inducement he may be under to form such towering conceptions of the state of CHRIST'S Kingdom here on earth, that he was so far from being what he had conceived of him, that he even wanted the necessary conveniences of life; and that his outward condition and circumstances were so very mean, that he had not wherewith to purchase (what Providence had abundantly provided for the brutal part of the Creation) a proper retreat and habitation: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This, I say, might be the principal intention of our blessed Saviour by this answer. But it may serve likewise, as a future admonition to all Christians, how inseparably attached they ought to be to the Rules and Precepts of the Christian Institution; and how dangerous a thing it is to apostatize from that Faith which they have professed before God and man, and avowed to persevere in, in despite of those most formidable adversaries, the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*.

A little reflection only on the degeneracy of the present age, and indeed of most of the preceding ones, more or less, may serve to convince us how very applicable this advice in the Text is to the condition of most Christians. Few, I believe, if any, there are, who can truly assert, since they have been able to distinguish between Good and Evil, that they have perfectly fulfilled their Baptismal Vow, either as to their having shunned the Vices and Temptations of the World, or invariably kept and persevered in all the Articles of the Christian Faith. We are too apt to presume upon the merciful conditions of this great Covenant of Grace, and suspend the performance of them to a time which it is highly probable we may never attain to. Serving two masters now a-days, though condemned as utterly inconsistent with the virtue and character of a Christian, is a piece of policy very frequent in this adulterous and evil generation. And a partial Obedience, and counterfeit Devotion, are esteemed by most men as Duties perfectly agreeable to the design of the Gospel Covenant.

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Such Libertines as these cannot see the necessity there is for those who have "put on" CHRIST, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." They conceive it but reasonable to pay some regard to the pressing inclinations of corrupt Nature, to make some allowances for Flesh and Blood, without deviating in the least, as they imagine, from the dictates of their Profession.

What dependence men can have, or what hopes they can form from such a practice, I am unable to account for. But if they would consider the danger of such a course, and the express declarations of Scripture, that they, and none but they, "are blessed," "who keep the Commandments," that "we" "cannot serve God and Mammon;" that it is utterly inconsistent, when we have devoted ourselves to the service of God, to divide our affections between him and the world; and that, besides the inconsistency of it, there is so much danger in it, that we may utterly disqualify ourselves from partaking of those joys which are promised only to the truly Faithful. For every deviation from our Duty, is in effect a direct breach of our Allegiance,

Allegiance, and an apostasy from our God. We do with our own hands break up the seal of the Covenant we are under with God, and render ourselves incapable of the rewards annexed by him thereto. We quit the title of his Children and Servants, and become agents of the Devil. In a word, we hazard the loss of future and immortal Happiness, to follow the mean and low designs of worldly policy; than which nothing can be more preposterous!

There is indeed, as has been before hinted, under this merciful Dispensation, a gracious mean of a Recovery left to the vilest Prostitute, and the most abandoned Criminal; but the difficulties there are to be surmounted, in order to this blessed change, are, in the Apostle's opinion, almost next to an impossibility to overcome: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." And indeed, the truth of

of this is too apparent. To one returning Prodigal, — to one who forsakes a sinful course, "and doth that which is lawful and "right," there are numberless instances of unrelenting Sinners, who walk on still in darkness, and quit this world, without a due reflection on futurity, a true repentance, or a Remorse for their past abominations; The nature of Sin being such, that when a man is once hampered and intangled in the snares of it, he is too easily led captive by its influence, and becomes subjected to its fatal dominion. In such a state, he is so far incapable of doing a religious or good action, that he is unable of himself to harbour even a good thought; all his desires and inclinations run gross and dreggy, and he becomes an utter slave to his own corruptions and sins.

The only way, therefore, to be secure from this dangerous and destructive error, is to persevere in the path of Holiness, to consider who we are, and what obligations we are under to lead a holy and religious life; and to let our conversation be as "becometh "the Gospel of CHRIST." And the method

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I would propose For this, is, to be very intent on our Duty, and not suffer the affairs of this life to interfere with the duty and practice of our Religion. Let us only, when we are tempted to act contrary to the known rules of our Profession; cast an eye of Faith upon the Joy above, and I am persuaded, it will be sufficient to confront and baffle all the allurements of Flesh and Blood, and the gaudy trifles of this perishing World. One faithful thought of Heaven would raise us above all the fears and troubles which distract this present state, and we might with unconcern behold all our Hopes and Interests lost and shipwrecked upon the billows of an inconstant world; upon a certain persuasion that our Heaven, our Eternity was safe. What conflict can possibly be difficult, which is to be thus rewarded? Who can faint or languish in his race, that hath his eye fixed upon such a crown of immortality?

Let us, therefore, beg of God, that he would give us Grace so to value the things of this life, as not for the sake of them to forfeit the crown and glories of Eternity:

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But

ON LUKE IX. 62. 63

But that whilst we continue here, we may take all opportunities of entertaining ourselves with agreeable and delightful apprehensions of Him, who is the fittest object of the Love and Adoration of our immortal Souls.

And be content with such things as

ON T E N T M E N T is a duty to naturally subvert to the great principle of Religion, that it cannot be too often or too seriously inculcated. It serves not only as an instruction to us how we are to behave under the common accidents of life, but it teaches us to conduct ourselves under the calamities of Heaven, and to do and suffer all things without murmurings and disputings. Upon which account I shall proceed to make use of some motives which may excite us not only to observe an exact conformity to the doctrine in the Text, but to have a heart us to shun all the unhappy effects of a contrary temper.

The

SERMON



S E R M O N III.

H E B. xiii. 5.

*And be content with such things as
you have.*

ONTENTMENT is a duty
so naturally subservient to the
great interests of Religion, that
it cannot be too often or too fe-
riously inculcated. It serves not only as an
instruction to us how we are to behave un-
der the common accidents of life, but it teach-
es us to conduct ourselves under the chas-
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all things without murmurings and dis-
putings. Upon which account I shall pro-
ceed to make use of some motives which
may excite us not only to observe an exact
conformity to the doctrine in the Text, but
likewise instruct us to shun all the unhappy
effects of a contrary temper.

The

The first motive therefore I shall mention that should induce us to be content with such things as we have, is a due reflection upon the Vanity and Unsatisfactoriness of worldly happiness.

Whoever seriously considers the utmost perfection human nature is capable of in this life, and reflects upon the many difficulties and disappointments which attend us in the pursuit of it; and how incapable the best qualified Estate is to satisfy our wants and complete our happiness, cannot be over-much concerned about any worldly Good or Evil. A man's own experience will convince him that the things of this life are so far from yielding any solid comfort and satisfaction, that they very often rob him of his Virtue, and superinduce ill habits, which prove the bane and destruction of the Proprietor.

All the advantages a State of affluence affords, (admit that their riches are made use of in a manner suitable to the design of the Donor) are at best but an increase of care in the proper distribution of them. The

wants of Nature may as well be satisfied in a less prosperous condition. And really considering the general provision there is made for those who are unable to provide for or subsist themselves, I can hardly think any state of life so mean but what a good Christian may submit to, and be contented with. His own industry will supply him with the necessary conveniences for the support of life; and though his lot hath not fallen to him in so fair a ground as that of his neighbour, yet he has no reason to be very uneasy at this disproportion; it is the hand of Providence that makes this difference; and therefore, as the one has no cause to complain and murmur, so it would be highly criminal in the other to vaunt or boast himself upon such a disparity.

Indeed one great cause from which a principal share of this uneasiness and discontent arises, is from a mistaken opinion of Persons and Things. We are apt to imagine that the largest share of Happiness must be inseparable from the largest Abundance; and that accordingly, on the good or evil things of this life, depend the several portions of Happiness or Misery. But

But this is a supposition that is built upon wrong principles, and is chiefly owing to our ignorance and unacquaintance with the instruments of worldly Happiness. Our eyes are too apt to be dazzled with the outward splendor of things, without being able to discern the filth and disagreeableness within. With persons of this cast of temper it must be confessed indeed that the trinket of an Equipage, and gaudy outside, will have their charms, and demand a more than ordinary respect and veneration. But if they would reflect how much of the Proprietor's time and pains have been spent in furnishing out this appearance; what Luxury and Intemperance it has since occasioned; how many innocent persons perhaps have suffered by this extravagance, and what must be the consequence of such a procedure with respect to himself; there cannot be the least room for their Envy or Discontent. These are circumstances that too often attend the Rich and Wealthy, and may serve to convince us, that there is not any thing so very alluring even in the best qualified Estate in this life, as to make us uneasy and discontented.

But *secondly* : Another reason why we should be easy and satisfied with our present condition, is, that the things of this life are no farther serviceable to us than during our abode here ; which is so small a portion of time, that one would think (considering what an important Interest we all of us have in another world) there could not be any room for murmuring and complaining in this. For who, that saw with the eye of Faith, that was intent upon the race set before him, would not rather slight than partake of the common Indulgences of Flesh and Blood ? Who that had " set his Affections " on things above," could be tempted to forfeit the love of God, by placing them on the earth ? Who that considered that his glass was just spent, that he was now " entering into the joy of his Lord," would be dazzled with the pomp of earthly Grandeur, when the one was of so precarious and perishing a nature, the other so exquisite and eternal ? But, *thirdly*,

Another reason why we should be satisfied with the things which we have, or our present allotment, is, because after all our
uneasiness

uneasiness and anxiety, our utmost care and solicitude to alter events, it will be to no purpose. A discontented mind will find ease in no state. A man when he is not satisfied when he is under the care and protection of Heaven, and has such encouragement to submit to the divine Appointments, must be unable to form any scheme to satisfy his wants, and compose the hurry and disorder of his passions. Such a one is at variance with every event, and perpetually uneasy at the success of others. A public Benefit is to him private gaul and bitterness of soul, and what affords joy and gladness to others, is to him weeping and gnashing of teeth. But, what is the most shocking reflection of all, this distemper by being too much indulged becomes incurable; it grows with the constitution, and is at last inseparably united to it. Neither the Blessings nor Severity of Heaven can affect it; it is neither content with present circumstances, thankful for past favours, nor easy under future expectations. There is no room for Grace to interpose; he lives his own Tormentor in this life, and for ever excludes himself from Happiness in the next.

Fourthly, Another consideration to induce us to be content with such things as we have, is, that this is to be one of the instances of our obedience which is to fit and prepare us for a better Life.

Our main business in this world ought to be so contrived, as that, in every action and employment, we should have regard to our final Happiness. The wide difference there is, both in their nature and duration, between the Happiness of Heaven and the Joys of Earth, should excite us to this obedience. And the shortness of the time for the performing those conditions, whereby this Happiness is to be obtained, should induce us to let slip no opportunity of doing the will of our Heavenly Father.

We are here as so many Agents under God; and it is expected by him, that we should serve him to the best of our capacity. No plea of circumstance will extenuate for the neglect or breach of his Precepts. Our not having received the good things of this life, will be no sufficient claim to the Happiness of the next, without we have performed

ed what is our positive Duty, and shunned the commission of what we are forbidden. So that throughout the whole of our conduct in this life, we cannot be too vigilant and circumspect with regard to our religious Duties. One neglect or transgression may undo us, and cast a veil over all our other good actions, and render them ineffectual. In this case "all our righteousness that we have done shall not be mentioned, in the sin that we have sinned we shall die."

But what should make us more particularly careful in our endeavours after this peaceable and contented temper, is the great influence it will have upon all our other behaviour. A man who hath "learned in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content," will have too great a regard for his own quiet for any mean worldly revolution to discompose him. He knows he is in a world where Offences must come, and is sufficiently instructed how to receive what may happen to him from the behaviour of his fellow-creatures, and to prevent them by his own demeanor. He is assured that the ill treatment and injuries he meets with here,

are permitted as trials of his patience, and that they will turn to his account in that great Day, when "wisdom shall be justified" of her children."

And as he is qualified to deal with the common accidents of life, so he is able to discover the finger of God in the severest Dispensations, and to preserve a conscience void of offence in the worst and most painful circumstances. By this gracious influence he at last arrives to one of the highest attainments in Christianity, that is, "to walk" by Faith, and not by Sight," to bear up against the shocks of adversity, and to suffer the most formidable evils, through the assistance of Him who is invisible. So certain and beyond all dispute is that observation of the Apostle, that "the trial of our Faith" worketh Patience; and Patience, Experience; and Experience, Hope."

Fifthly, Another method that leads to the enjoyment of a contented mind, is a due reflection on the relation we stand in towards our Maker. He who created us is best acquainted with the necessities of our nature;

nature; and, we may be assured, has provided for them accordingly. As he has been pleased to dignify Man with superior faculties, and to put all things in this lower world under him, so it is very reasonable to infer his more than ordinary care and providence over him. And indeed nothing can deprive us of this tender concern, or render us unworthy of future benefits, but our abuse of them. It is most certain God intended, by this gracious provision, to qualify us for greater Joys; and, provided we employ our respective talents as we ought, he will not be wanting to reward us accordingly.

And therefore it is a mean reflection, and, one would imagine, unworthy the dignity of a reasonable creature, to think hardly of Providence for permitting so partial a distribution of the good things of this life. As if an all-sufficient Being, who stands in need of nothing to complete his Happiness, was unaccountably fond of the persons of some men more than of others; or that Prosperity in this life was a certain mark and token of Election in the next. Whereas, in fact, the possession of Wealth and Riches doth

not intitle a man to the favour of God, any more than Want and Poverty. "He " that doth the will of my Father which is " in Heaven," be his externals what they will, " shall enter into the Kingdom of " Heaven."

There is no reserve, no exception to be made to this rule. Thus the rich man, if by a charitable use of his Wealth, he hath " laid up a good foundation against the time " to come, may lay hold of eternal life." So likewise the poor man, if he has borne the hard circumstances of his Condition in this life with content and true resignation of soul, shall be intitled to that Happiness promised in the Gospel, " yours is the Kingdom " of Heaven."

As to the reason of this unequal distribution; it will be sufficient to answer, that it is the will and pleasure of the supreme Being; and we may be satisfied that he permits it for very wise ends and purposes. If we could persuade ourselves that the vicissitudes and revolutions of human affairs were the effects of Chance and Fortune only; then

then indeed, if after long expectations and industrious trials for the advancing our condition, we should still remain unfortunate, we might, with a greater shew of reason, blame our stars, and be uneasy at our ill success. But when we are assured that all events on earth are at God's disposal; that he maketh poor, and maketh rich; and that it is out of the power of man to stay his arm, or prevent the execution of his will; we should quietly submit to our respective allotments; and be persuaded, that as he is the origin of all Power and Wisdom, so his dispensations are most exactly adapted to our several capacities; and consequently, there can be no room for any alteration or amendment.

Again; Another motive why we should be satisfied with our present allotment, is, that a contrary behaviour is a direct breach of a law of God, and includes in it the great sin of covetousness.

Now we are expressly told in Scripture, that persons guilty of this sin amongst many others, shall not inherit the Kingdom of
God.

GOD. Which severe declaration, one would imagine, should not be unattended with its due force and prevalence upon human inclinations. But we find it otherwise: those who have pursued the ways of gain, and have employed their time and thoughts upon worldly acquisitions, have no leisure to examine their conduct by the Divine Prescription, or to reflect, that while they are advancing in this present state they are losing ground in a future. They do not consider that a present temporal advantage, when purchased by the violation of a Divine Law, proves a real incumbrance to the possessor, And when he comes to reflect on the time he hath spent, the pains he hath been at, the ways and means he hath used, together with the application of the fruits of this unrighteousness, instead of affording him any real satisfaction, they will serve only to revive the remembrance of his past iniquity, and prove a sore burden, too heavy for him to bear.

There is not perhaps any one sin to which human nature is addicted, that is branded with such infamous characters, and hath
such

such visible marks of folly attending it, as that of the covetous person. The Psalmist introduces him as an object of God's utmost hatred and detestation, and makes it an additional degree of guilt in those who persecuted the Poor, because "they spake good of the covetous whom God abhorred." St. James likewise hath fully assured us, that this passion after worldly acquisitions is inconsistent with the love and friendship of God: "Beloved, says he, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And indeed it is, properly speaking, that *hardness of heart* so often mentioned in Scripture that will not admit of any other impression but that of worldly interest. And it is pretty evident, that this was likewise the parent of that vile Hypocrisy which reigned in the Pharisees; who had no regard to that part of Religion which consisted in doing good to others, as they desired God would do to them.

But to represent the extensive influence of this mischievous and inordinate love of the world, we need only consult what the Scriptures inform us of in the character of *Judas*,
who

who was so possessed with this passion as to be guilty of Theft ; and so shameful a one too as to steal from the Poor. As he was likewise of Hypocrisy, by pretending to resent the waste that was made of the costly ointment under the extraordinary appearance of the care and concern he had for the Poor ; " This ointment, says he, might have " been sold for much, and given to the " Poor." But we are afterwards informed, by the great Discerner of Hearts, of his real design in speaking this ; " This he said, " not that he cared for the Poor, but because he was a Thief, and had the Bag, " and bare what was put therein." But this was not all, his thirst after money was so great, that it made him a Traitor ; for this he did not scruple to betray the best Master in the world, though he had just before candidly represented to him the great danger of such a proceeding. And when he had done this, the Devil took such full possession of him, that upon a self-conviction of his treachery and perfidiousness he at last egged him on to close the scene of his villanies by his own destruction.

Nothing

Nothing more need be added to convince us of the pernicious and fatal effects of this Vice, and how difficult it is to stop the progress of it where it is once indulged. And therefore it highly concerns us to be careful how we admit so dangerous a passion to take root, and not to suffer the World, nor the Things of it, to ingross our time and thoughts beyond what is necessary: To watch over our behaviour in all prosperous and unfortunate events; to be thankful for the blessings of Heaven, patient and contented in a low estate, and perfectly resigned to all the ways of Providence.

These are some of the methods which are to be used towards establishing that quiet and peaceable temper mentioned in the Text. There are many others; But I shall content myself with making a reflection on what has been already observed.

Supposing a man to be duly informed of the wants and necessities of nature, why should he be uneasy, or suspend his happiness, when he is in a condition of life that is capable of supplying him with these necessary conveniences?

ences? Whence, I say, should so unaccountable a dissatisfaction arise? It is plain he either considers not that it is in his own power to be happy; or he vainly apprehends something at a distance will certainly happen to interrupt his composure. What I would introduce by this Preface is, the ridiculous behaviour of the covetous person. Upon an apprehension of not having made a provision for life, or a fear of being reduced to Poverty, he is disqualified not only to enjoy the fruits of his dishonest industry, but to quit the iniquitous pursuit of gain. For it is a rare Instance (I will not say without example) for a man thus conversant, on a sudden to break off from his pursuits, and rest satisfied with what he hath already acquired. But admit he does, it is much to be feared that his former conversation will have no creditable influence upon him in the proper disposal of what he is possessed of. This is so natural a consequence of worldly Solitude and Anxiety, that even the most prosperous and fortunate in this respect should be so far from being objects of our Envy and Discontent, that they should really fill us with Pity and Compassion.

If

If we consider only that the main business of our lives ought to be taken up in comforting and assisting each other, and in rendering to our Maker a reasonable Service; and that without the due performance of both these, we shall not enter into life Eternal; how desperate must be the case of the person we are now speaking to? If men of beneficent tempers naturally claim the esteem and veneration of their Brethren, that of the covetous person must as naturally procure their abhorrence and disrespect; if the good man, by "dispensing abroad and giving to the poor," lays a good foundation against the time to come, the covetous man, in the mean time, by laying up treasures on earth, without considering their proper use and improvement, forfeits that Happiness to which a behaviour like the generous man's would have recommended him; and misery irretrievable is the fatal event of all his solicitude.

But there is something so very absurd in this behaviour of the covetous person I am now considering, as upon first sight would seem incredible, did we not see it too often
verified

verified in practice. It too often happens, that the love of the world, when it has once taken possession, excludes all dispositions to Piety and Virtue, and though it be ever so successful in its progress, is seldom observed to be confined within any bounds, or satisfied with the greatest acquisitions. But where is the wisdom of all this industry, and what are the ends proposed by all this solicitude? Could not a man in plentiful circumstances have tasted the same Happiness, which he proposed to enjoy upon a farther increase of his substance? If this were not to be admitted, this behaviour would argue a good share of Prudence and Frugality. But the truth is, our Nature is so easily sufficed, and our Senses may be so reasonably gratified, that this can never be a just pretence for a man to whom God has given Wealth and Riches not to eat thereof and be satisfied.

This, as *Solomon* observes, is one of the most remarkable instances of Folly which could possibly attend human nature, and carries with it such a mixture of Ingratitude as may justly be reckoned amongst the greatest Impieties.

But

But then, on the contrary, it does not always happen, that those whose inclinations are so violently set upon the things of this world, are yet so happy as to meet with suitable success. The Miser may be, and often is ruined by sundry accidents, and what he has been raking together for many years, may be ransacked and carried off in one night. The Usurer, after many successful Loans, may be tempted to venture the whole of his substance upon large Premiums, and at last be deceived in his Security, and lose the whole. And when this is the case, when all their projects to secure an earthly Paradise prove abortive, and all their hopes of success end in disappointment, where can such persons apply for Ease and Satisfaction? For, besides the smart of outward evils, which are sufficient to sink them into the depth of despair, the secret stings from within, the cutting reflections of Conscience, in having neglected their Duty, and perverted the design of their creation, must give them the greatest uneasiness and disquiet. They can neither in their present condition expect any comfort from the *good things*, as they are called, of this life, which are now fled from

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them like a dream, nor, without the inter-
fition of God's special Grace, look forward
for Mercy in a future state.

The way therefore to be secure from these
dangerous and fatal errors, to prevent the
sad effects of accidental evil, and to shun
the immoderate love and cares of the World,
is to be convinced in our minds, that what-
ever is permitted to happen in this life, must
be the certain result of the will and direction
of Heaven. And however unable we may
be to judge of the dispensations of God to
the sons of men, we must always admit
they are intended for our good; and pro-
vided we make that use of them for which
they were permitted, they will never fail to
administer something, at the same time that
they afflict the Body, to heal and compose
the Soul. So that we have nothing to do
to perplex ourselves with human affairs, but,
after having been industrious in our callings,
to dispose our temporal concerns in the best
manner we are able, and to leave the issue
and event wholly to Providence. To be
farther solicitous, would be an argument of
our diffidence of the supreme Being, and
that

that we did not care to trust Providence with events, though at the same time, it is out of our power to prevent its determination.

This behaviour will likewise instruct us to make a proper use of the Good Things of this life ; and not to measure our Happiness from the largeness of our possessions, but only as we are fitted and prepared for a better life. If we have been so bold and daring, as to allot too great a share of our life towards amassing earthly treasure, this will excite us to be more active and diligent in "laying up" for ourselves a treasure in Heaven ;" and spending the remainder of our days in works of charity and goodness. If, instead of the *good*, we have received the *evil* things of this life, this will inspire us with grace and courage to behave agreeably to the design for which they were dealt to us, and fill us with the delightful assurance of a future Retribution.

In a word ; by habituating ourselves to this discipline, we shall soon be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, and learn, with the great Apostle, "in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content."

that we do not care to ...
great ...
our power to prevent ...

This behavior will ...
make a proper use of the Good ...
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from the ...
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If we have ...
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In a word, by ...
discipline we shall soon be filled with the
Fruits of Righteousness, and ...
great ...
there will be content.



S E R M O N IV.



MATT. V. 9.

*Blessed are the peace-makers, for
they shall be called the children of
God.*

AS the gracious design of our blessed
Saviour, by his coming into the
world, was "not to destroy the
Law and the Prophets, but to
fulfil them," so we find him taking the ear-
liest opportunity, when he had fulfilled all
Righteousness, that is, after he had con-
formed to the legal oeconomy, and been bap-
tized with the baptism of *John*, of intro-
ducing that perfect and complete System
which was to direct men to that Happiness,
which the world till then had been unac-
quainted with ; to which neither Gentile
Philosophy could attain, nor even the great

Expounders of the Law, those who sat in *Moses's* seat, could ever reach. And it is very observable, that our blessed Saviour, in the process of his doctrine in that inimitable Discourse on the Mount, takes notice of several Moral Duties, as they were observed under the legal dispensation; and shews, by the additional Precepts, which he annexes to each of those Duties, and which he demonstrates to be absolutely and essentially necessary to the proper discharge of them, how lamely and imperfectly they had been practised "by them of old time:" intimating at the same time, how defective the Law itself was, even in the most important instances, to justify the most strict and zealous observer of it. And though he does not immediately subjoin any comment by way of directing us to those dispositions of mind to which he prefixes his Blessings at the beginning of this Chapter, yet we find in the course of his doctrine, that he introduces several Precepts which naturally lead to the acquisition of them.

Thus those who would deserve the blessed and desirable appellation of *Peace-makers*, must

must be careful, not only not to offend against the literal prohibition of the Law, which says, "Thou shalt not kill:" but they must likewise shun every occasion of giving offence, and endeavour to hurt no one in his Person, Fortune, or Reputation. For that these Injuries, though they were of an inferior nature, and what the Law of *Moses* might not take cognisance of, would now be attended with as fatal a consequence, if not repented of, as the breach of the letter of the Law itself.

Nay, he goes even farther than this, and enjoins a more perfect accomplishment of this Duty, by not only obliging us to abstain from all injurious treatment, but likewise by commanding us to put in execution all the good offices of Humanity and Christian Charity. And, the better to enforce this Doctrine, he admonishes all those who "bring their gifts to the altar," (by which Dr *Hammond* observes, is meant their *Peace-Offering*), if they were conscious of any misunderstanding, or if they bore any malice or hatred in their hearts, to "leave there their gift before the Altar, and go first and be reconciled to

"the offended party, and then come and
 "offer their gift." This kind of behaviour
 he proves to be not only a religious Duty,
 but a prudential part of our conduct with
 respect to affairs in common life; and shews,
 in the instance that follows, the mischievous
 effects of a contrary practice: Saying, "A-
 "gree with thine adversary quickly, whilst
 "thou art in the way with him; lest thine
 "adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and
 "the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and
 "thou be cast into prison. I say unto thee,
 "Thou shalt by no means come out thence,
 "till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

Thus he observes to us the great import
 of a peaceable disposition, even in secular
 life; and plainly intimates the absolute ne-
 cessity of it in the performance of our reli-
 gious Duties: that otherwise all our other
 good Works will be unacceptable to God;
 and we shall ask, but not receive, because
 we ask amiss.

This, with what I shall observe in the se-
 quel of this Discourse, will, I hope, fully
 convince us how truly happy and blessed
 they

they are whom our Saviour in the Text styles *Peace-makers*, and how worthy to be called "the Children of God."

And therefore in speaking to these words I shall endeavour to shew,

First, How this great Duty of Peace-making is to be performed, with respect to ourselves.

Secondly, I shall remark some particular instances whereby we may be qualified to mediate and interpose our good offices, with respect to others.

First then, I am to shew how this great Duty of Peace-making is to be performed, with respect to ourselves.

And here it may not be improper to premise, that the chief obstacles to this Duty are, what impediments are to be removed before we can practise it, before our endeavours in this particular can be effectual, or we ourselves qualified to let our light shine forth in all the several instances which naturally

ally fall under the Christian province of
Peace-making.

St Paul has given his *Ephesian* converts a list of these disturbers of society, and earnestly intreats them, as in other places of his Epistle, so particularly in the 31st verse of the 4th chapter, "that all Bitterness and
"and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour,
"and Evil-speaking be put away from them,
"with all Malice." These, he tells them, had been the fruits of their former conversation, in their natural and unregenerate state; and therefore, he reminds them of their new Profession, which obliged them
"with all Lowliness, and Meekness, and
"Long-suffering, to forbear one another in
"love; to endeavour to keep the unity of
"the Spirit in the bond of Peace; to be
"kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for
"CHRIST'S sake, had forgiven them."

So that in order to merit the character in the Text we must in the first place impartially examine into the state and condition of our own souls, and see whether we are qualified

lified to take upon us the blessed and desirable office of making peace. Whether our conduct and behaviour have been such as will recommend our good efforts in this particular, and influence others, so as to make them effectual. For without this previous regard to ourselves, without having given proof of our obedience to all the several Injunctions, which help to promote this great work in ourselves, we shall make but odd Solicitors with others; without having first acquainted ourselves with the fruits of that Spirit which worketh by Love, we shall want that divine Energy which must give life and vigour to our endeavours, and help to vanquish that powerful spirit, "that worketh in the children of Disobedience."

It will not be expected that I should enumerate all the qualifications, or give a distinct account of every method, whereby this Duty is to be discharged. However, I shall remark some of them, which will not only instruct us in the proper exercise of this Duty, but, if duly attended to, will be of excellent service to us throughout the whole course of our Christian Warfare;

The

The first of these that I shall mention is Forgiveness of Injuries; a Duty strictly enjoined, generally understood, but rarely practised. The certain and inevitable consequence of which, where neglected, is Strife and Contention; and where these are, the Apostle assures us, is Confusion, and every "evil Work." But an utter forbearance of all injurious treatment, must be one effectual method to put a stop to the Malice and Ill-will of others: When men of revengeful tempers once come to be disappointed in the effect of their ill offices, it will be to no purpose to repeat them. They will then want those pretences, upon which, generally speaking, persons of this cast of mind usually justify their Spite and Animosity. For ill turns are as often done by way of requital, as upon any other reasons whatever. And therefore to give no occasion of offence by a return of injurious treatment, to be "harmless, and behave as the Sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;" as this must necessarily prevent, and take off a great many ill offices, to which a contrary behaviour must be exposed, so likewise must it naturally procure many Friends.

It

It is a very uncommon instance in life, for any one who observes that universal rule of Justice, "of doing to all men as he would they should do unto him;" who never lies in wait to deceive or over-reach his Neighbour by trick or artifice, who gives no provocation to any one by contempt or ill language; it is, I say, seldom seen, that such an one is ever embroiled in quarrels of his own causing, or persecuted by the ill nature of others. His own peaceable conduct and behaviour must secure him the Friendship of good men; and however he may be stinted in his externals to make himself conspicuous, and to let his light shine forth in its proper lustre; though he wants the means to render himself beneficent, yet he certainly merits the character of a benevolent man; and will be rewarded as such in that great Day, "when Wisdom shall be justified of her children." When those other wants he laboured under here, shall be abundantly recompensed by the "fulness of joy at God's right hand."

The next good disposition of mind that I shall recommend, whereby we may discharge the

the Duty in the Text, with respect to ourselves; is forgiving of Injuries, so far as to do good against or in return for evil. This indeed is one of the greatest ornaments and perfections of a Christian; and the principal mark and distinction of the Gospel Covenant, to what was ever before practised in the world. And I am very sensible it will be objected to as a hard saying, and what grates too harshly upon flesh and blood. That it is not only exceeding difficult to be submitted to, but that it is unreasonable in the nature of the thing itself. But all these objections must be silenced, when we reflect that our blessed Saviour himself conformed to this doctrine, recommended it in his Gospel, and laid down his life to establish the observance of it. And therefore, his relinquishing Heaven and assuming our nature under all its disadvantages;—his condescending to solicit our pardon for us when we did not in the least deserve it;—his interposing between the anger of his Father and our iniquity;—his saving us that were lost, when we could not save ourselves;—should be most prevailing motives with us to imitate him in this particular, and extend that mercy to
our

our injurious and offending Brethren, which he hath shewed to us; *neque enim I debui*

But, *thirdly*, Another good disposition of mind whereby we may discharge this Duty, is, that if through want of prudence and foresight we be intangled in any quarrel, we should make it our business to put an end to it as soon as possible; to prevent, as much as in us lies, its gathering to any height, or breaking out into any open acts of hostility. To this purpose, if the breach was occasioned by us, we should not be wanting to make all such overtures for peace, as the nature of the offence requires; and immediately put in execution all the methods that may help to put an end to it.—Because the longer any difference subsists, the passions of men will grow more inflamed towards each other; and what concessions might have been effectual when the quarrel first broke out, will afterwards prove to no purpose. Thus it is observed by the wise man, (who no doubt was thoroughly acquainted with every habit and disposition of the mind) that "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water." And the advice he

he grounds upon this is the same with that which I am now upon ; " therefore, says he, " leave off contention before it be meddled " with ;" that is, before both parties are too deeply engaged in it, and it comes to be a complete quarrel ; because then, it will be much more difficult to compose, or put an end to it, than it was at first to have prevented it.

These are some of the many wise methods of preserving and securing Peace with respect to ourselves. And when we are thus prepared, when we know how to deal with the Injuries of men, and defend ourselves from the common attacks of the world, we shall be the better qualified to advise others. But as there are various ways of putting this in execution, so we shall meet with an infinite variety of tempers, which will require our utmost prudence and foresight that we fail not of success. And therefore, in the

Second place, When we come to practise this Duty upon others we should be particularly careful to be informed of all the proper requisites which may any way contribute

bute to make it effectual. And as I have observed before that there is an infinite variety of tempers and complexions in the world, which may make this employment the more difficult; so there are likewise particular methods whereby all the difficulties which arise from thence may be surmounted. An honest heart and a prudent head will generally be an overmatch for the greatest obstacles; and the work of Peace, and Reconciliation, however opposed and retarded, will in the end have their salutary effect.

The first and most obvious method which is necessary to this end, is a proper knowledge of the persons between whom we interpose. They that have made themselves masters of this, know how to adapt their rhetoric, and make their mediation acceptable to whomsoever they shall engage with. And it may be often observed, that an honest man, by a skilful address, shall have more influence upon the turbulent and unruly passions of human nature, than a long course of time attended with expensive remonstrances could ever be able to produce. Every man has his weaknesses; and if it is not in

the power of virtue and a good example to abate the force of his passions and resentments; yet a seasonable application may. The knowledge of what has the greatest influence upon him, will suggest to us the method; and our own prudence the time of putting it in execution. This is so sure a way of reducing the man to himself, and of composing the hurry and disorder of his passions, that none but those in whose ways are destruction and unhappiness, and who never were acquainted with the way of Peace, can be such monsters as not to be reclaimed by the force of it.

Another necessary qualification for the proper discharge of this Duty, is a strict impartiality. When we are called upon by contending Parties to decide differences, we must be careful that our inclinations lean not to one side more than to the other. But that our work and labour of love be finished in Judgment, Justice, and Equity. That the person offending have no just reason to be displeased with our Severity, nor the party offended have any cause of complaint for the seasonable favour which was shewed to

the delinquent. This prudent mixture of Mercy and Severity, in cases of this nature, doth so naturally beget Esteem and Reverence in the hearts of men, that it is no wonder if persons of such Integrity have a more than common influence upon the Passions and Affections of their Brethren; that they turn many to Righteousness, while others, who know not the way of Peace, and have not this equitable and conscientious regard in view, are unhappy instruments of increasing the number of such as turn Religion into Rebellion, and Faith into Faction: who have no law but that of their lust; the grand source and origin from whence flow all those disorders which disturb the Peace of Society, and make the world a scene of confusion.

What I would in the next place recommend towards making the work of Peace more effectual to the Peace-maker, is Perseverance. When we are engaged in matters of the nicest nature, and the contending parties are of the most untractable dispositions, we should never be discouraged in our attempts, or grow slack or remiss because of

the difficulties which may attend them. Every man that has his Neighbour's good at heart, and loves him as our holy Religion enjoins, even as he loves himself, will think himself obliged to pursue this Duty in every respect that offers. The happy consequence which will attend the due discharge of it, will not only teach him to pass over the slights and affronts of those on whom he hath bestowed his good offices, but it will instruct him, when occasion offers, to repeat them. He will pursue their Ingratitude till he hath finished his own Righteousness, and overcome their evil with his good.

Thus likewise when he charitably interposes between man and man, and is evidently convinced that the continuance of the misunderstanding between them will be attended with ruinous consequences; and that others, as well as themselves, will be involved in them, nothing should deter him from endeavouring a reconciliation. The little obstacles he met with at his first onset, should not discourage him from renewing his attack, and putting in execution all the methods his

Reason

Reason and Conscience could suggest. The motive upon which he proceeds will not only justify his conduct in this particular, but it will likewise afford him the most exquisite pleasure and satisfaction. If they "will not" listen to the voice of the charmer, charm "he never so wisely," yet he will have the pleasing consciousness of having performed his Duty; and they the aggravated guilt of having resisted so many engaging instances to prevent the unhappy consequences of their contention. But if, as it is most reasonable to imagine, his gracious and kind mediation should convert them from the error of their ways, and bring them to love as Brethren; he will then have the satisfaction of seeing the good effect of his labors, and the happy accomplishment of all his endeavors, by so blessed, so desirable an event.

These are some of the most probable methods of making Peace between such as disagree; and though more might be mentioned, yet these few which I have already observed are of so large and extensive a nature, that if we have but a due regard to the exercise of them, we need not fear miscarry-

ing in our kind undertakings, nor inheriting that blessedness in the Text, of being called "the Children of God."

If ever therefore we would be innocent with respect to our own conduct, and secure from the injuries and ill treatment of others, if we desire the Blessing of God should establish us, and preserve to us the long enjoyment of our holy Religion, let us beg of God to give us Grace to "endeavour after" Peace, and things wherewith we may edify one another," that we may fulfil our Duty in all its several relations, by being faithful and peaceable Subjects, kind and beneficent Neighbours, pious and obedient Servants of that God who will reward our honest and sincere endeavors in this life, and in his own good time give us the inestimable Blessing of Peace; which will be lasting Quietness, and Assurance for ever.

And for the attaining of this blessed event let us, in the words of our most excellent Church, beseech our "Almighty and Everlasting God, who governs all things in Heaven and Earth,

" Earth, mercifully to hear the Supplica-
 " tions of his people, and to grant us his
 " Peace all the days of our life, through
 " JESUS CHRIST our LORD ; to whom,
 " with the Father and holy Spirit, be all
 " Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty,
 " and Dominion, now, henceforth, and
 " for evermore. *Amen.*

*March therefore, for your LORD'S sake
 that your LORD'S will come.*

The words and part of an
 answer returned by our blessed
 LORD to his Disciples upon the
 occasion of their asking him, when shall
 these things be? that shall be the sign
 of the coming of the end of the
 world. Where, if we have regard to
 the context, we may observe, he does not
 satisfy their curiosity, by stating the
 time, and fixing these future events to any
 period, which it was not at all ne-
 cessary that they should be acquainted with,
 but only observes to them for order probably
 to their caution against this great ac-
 cident the word **H** 4 **SERMON**



S E R M O N V.

MATT. XXIV. 42.

*Watch therefore, for you know not
what hour your LORD doth come.*

THESE words are part of an answer returned by our blessed LORD to his Disciples upon this question; "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Where, if we have recourse to the context, we may observe, he does not directly satisfy their curiosity, by stating the time, and fixing these future events to any certain period, which it was not at all necessary that they should be acquainted with, but only observes to them (in order probably to excite their caution against these great accidents) the terrible signs and forerunners of them.

We

We need not be at any pains to explain what is here principally intended by these events. For though the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the shutting up of the Jewish Oeconomy might be originally meant, yet the end of the world, the last and final Day of Judgment is so interwoven in this description, that it can hardly be thought that our Saviour could speak of the *one*, without pronouncing of the *other*. For at the thirtieth verse of this chapter, he represents himself as coming in the clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory, and at the verse following, the angels sounding the last and dreadful alarm, which is so clear an evidence, and seems to have so direct a reference to that most important time of discrimination, of separating the *goats* from the *sheep*, that surely we cannot hear the warning in the Text, without putting ourselves in a readiness and preparing for his coming. Reasons innumerable may be offered, why we should be thus upon our guard: But I shall only enforce this Duty from three which are implied in the Text, the

First of which, is the person to come.

Secondly, The nature of his coming.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The uncertainty of that hour.

"For you know not the hour your

"Lord doth come."

Out of all which will naturally follow this conclusion, which is enough to startle and awaken us all; "Watch therefore, for you know not the hour your Lord doth come."

And therefore, to follow the Method we have laid down, it will concern us first to consider the person that is to come, under the character given of him in the Text, which is that of *our* LORD. In pursuance of which I shall not enumerate all the glorious representations given us of the Messiah in Scripture before his Incarnation, in order to shew how applicable this title is to him; neither shall I take up any of your time in observing how fully he hath acquitted himself in the discharge of that important work God gave him to do on earth. I shall only consider him in his present capacity, as a person vested with sovereign power, and to whom we are one day to be accountable for all our actions. To the end therefore that every

knee

knee may bow, and every tongue confess him to be the Lord, let us only take notice of the greatness and extent of his dominion, which the Psalmist tells us "is from sea to sea, and from the flood unto the world's end." From *Adam* the first man, even to those "that shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, all are his Subjects, Creatures and Servants. For he hath set him, saith *St Paul*, at his right hand in the heavenly places, and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the Church?" And what a shadow, what a meer nothing, comparatively speaking, is the power of this world to this? All other dominions have their bounds and limits, which they cannot pass but by violence and the sword; neither indeed is it expedient that the world should be governed by one universal Monarch; the multitudes of men, and the distance of places being so great, that it could not well subsist under one Government.

Thus it falls out in this lower world; but it is not so in the Kingdom of this our Lord; no place so remote or distant, to which his power

power cannot reach ; no recess so private or retired, which his eye does not remark and take notice of ; no thought so secret, no word nor action, throughout the intercourse of life, but " he knoweth it altogether." And as he is Omniscient in himself, so he is Omnipotent in his dominion ; and, should the world shake off their Allegiance to him, should there be an universal desertion, and falling away, which will never happen, yet this would not in the least divest him of his Sovereignty. For his Royalty depends not, like that of earthly Monarchs, on the Duty and Fidelity of his subjects. Neither deceit nor violence can weaken his title, or contract his power. And should the world combine, as the Citizens in the Gospel did, and declare their dislike to his Empire ; yet in all this scorn and contempt, in this open rebellion and contradiction of sinners, he is still their LORD. And as he favours those subjects, who are faithful and obedient, so he will order his Executioners, to take " those " his enemies, who would not that he " should reign over them, and slay them " before him."

As

As he is Omnipotent; and his dominion without limitation, so it is most lasting, and never to be destroyed. No time shall waste it, no craft undermine it. The Apostle indeed speaks of an end, of delivering up the Kingdom, and of Subjection. It is true there shall be an end, but that will not be till he hath put down all authority and power. So that this end will be no failing; this resignation of his Kingdom, no diminution of his greatness, this subjection no weakness or infirmity. He shall deliver up his power and be still a LORD: that is, in the opinion of a learned father, he will lay aside the ensigns of his supremacy when his Church is perfected, when there will be no enemy stirring to subdue, no use of Laws to encourage Virtue and punish Vice: But all things will be at an end, his enemies in chains, and his subjects free from the fears of hell, and temptations of the Devil: so that there will be an end, yet he will reign still; though he be subject, yet he will be as much supreme as ever; though he shall deliver up his Kingdom, yet he will not lose it, but remain a LORD and KING for evermore.—I shall now, in the

Second

Second Place, consider the nature and manner of his coming. For we cannot imagine that our blessed Saviour is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, as an idle spectator, and unconcerned with what is transacted here below; but that he still continues to rule in the congregation of his Saints on earth, and governs and disposes of the state of times, and the actions of men, and that his power exerts itself even where it is not apparent. For though he be at so great a distance from us, and so far remote from our sight; yet he takes a view of universal Nature at once, and keeps a book of remembrance to register all our Virtues and all our Failings. Indeed the profane person would put out the eye of his Providence, and the moral Atheist pull him from his throne, and thrust him out of the world.— The Hypocrite and insincere Christian, like the scoffers of old, who walk after their own lusts, still ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

But can He, whom the voice of God and man, whom Scripture and Miracles have placed on the tribunal, and made Judge of all the world, be kept back by these vain imaginations?

imagination? Shall he not execute his office, because we are guilty and deserve condemnation? Or is his delay in coming a certain argument that he will not come at all? This is the false reasoning, the wretched result and inference of Flesh and Blood. For it is not his slackness (that is our impious interpretation) but his long-suffering "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

And this is the true reason why he is not yet come. For time is nothing to him, nor indeed is it any thing in itself. We cannot form any conception of it, but from those actions which we repeat over and over again. "A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday." We look upon the Day of Judgment, as upon a day to come; but to him it is already present. That he is not come to us, is for our sakes. For the Church of CHRIST, till the consummation of all things, is wrapt up in the body of time, and successively gains the addition of parts. Thus we read in the second chapter of the *Acts*; "That the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." And this

is the very reason why he suspends his coming, and why the consummation and end of all things is not yet. For by his eternal Wisdom he foresees that there will be many, some in the womb of time, and others already in being, who will turn to him by repentance. " For the Promise, as *St Peter* observes, is made to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that probably there will be many thousands who are not yet, that shall be Saints hereafter. For their sakes therefore it is that he doth not come to judge the world, that wicked men are permitted to dwell on the earth, and the Devil to rage; that Violence and Injustice, Rapine and Oppression sit uppermost in the world; that he suffers men to break his commands—to question his Providence—to doubt of his Being, and complain of Events. But when that number of his Saints, for which he bears with all this insolence, is complete, then time shall be no more. Then shall he appear in all the pomp and majesty of Heaven, and bring with him the marks of his Omnipotence. Then shall he whet his glittering sword, and

his hand shall take hold of judgment. Then he will render Vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him. Then the Atheist and profane person, shall confess he is God, and those monsters of Pride and Injustice who have made their will a law, and worshipped no other Deity than themselves, shall be convinced of his Providence and Superintendence of Affairs below, by their own eternal condemnation. Then too all the intricacies and seeming inequalities of Providence will be unfolded. All remarkable instances of the divine Patience and Severity will be explained, and it will appear that "the Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness," that he neither disdained, nor neglected the administration of human affairs, but that "there is a God" that judgeth the earth; that his eyes behold the children of men; that all the circumstances of their nature, actions, and conditions, are remarked. All the Good and Evil they have done, together with the degrees and aggravations of it, all these things, as the Psalmist expresses it, "will be noted in his book."

As to the manner in which all these solemnities will be introduced, our Saviour himself hath been very particular in informing us: The Parable of the Seed, and the close of the twenty-fifth chapter of St Matthew, are not only very expressive of the manner of CHRIST's coming, and the persons who are to attend him, but the form in which he will proceed, and by whom it will be executed; the reason of the distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked, between those that served GOD, and those that served him not, together with their Rewards and Punishments, therein respectively assigned. No man who is a Christian need be farther solicitous, or desire a fuller assurance of a day of Judgment, or what will be transacted at that time, than what is given us in the application of this Parable. It were needless likewise to observe at this general convention, when all nations shall be gathered together, whether every one will be proceeded against by a particular Indictment, according to their deeds done in the flesh, or be subject to one common and endless calamity. The Omniscience of the supreme Being will render the form of the

first procedure needless, and his Goodness will prevent the latter. For as we are assured, by our blessed Saviour of different degrees of Bliss and Glory in a future state, so we may reasonably infer different degrees of Punishment in the regions of misery and torment.

But it is sufficient for the encouragement of Virtue, that "the Righteous go away" into life eternal," be his portion of Happiness ever so small in so glorious a kingdom; and it should be a terror to Vice and Impiety, to have the sentence of everlasting Punishment affixed to them, be the infliction of it ever so trifling and inconsiderable. For we are to consider, that there is no term of time appointed for a release from this state, no other method proposed whereby to expect future mercy; "the worm that never dieth," and the fire that never will be quenched," are to be our inseparable attendants. In this condition we must for ever remain incapable of Happiness, or even of soothing or alleviating that degree of torment to which we are consigned. The immeasurable distance of Heaven, the great Gulph between the
Righteous

Righteous and the Wicked, which we are informed in Scripture is unpassable, might as easily be traversed, as to expect comfort, or the smallest respite from misery in such a state. God's decrees are absolute and irreversible, and what induced him at the first to propose Rewards and Punishments, will oblige him, at this time of Vengeance, to dispense them accordingly.

No one point of the Christian Institution is more firmly supported than the doctrine of a future Judgment, nor is there any thing more agreeable to reason, than the manner in which it will be executed. The Rewards and Punishments are equally proportioned, eternal Happiness to him who doth the will of his heavenly Father, the same share of Misery to him that neglects it. As to the different portions and degrees they both are capable of, that should have no other influence upon us, than to make us strive to excel in Virtue and Morality. We should never think ourselves too secure of Heaven, nor can one who is but a little vicious expect to escape Hell. When we have exerted our faculties to the utmost, when

we have done all that was commanded us, yet considering the immense wages we are to receive for such slender performances, we never should desist, never be faint nor weary in well-doing: for such a presumption may bring upon us swift destruction. And then our having persevered a great while in our Duty, will be no excuse for deserting it for the smallest interval. In this case "all the
"righteousness that we have done shall not
"be mentioned, in the sin we have sinned
"we shall die."

Having discharged myself with regard to the nature and manner of CHRIST's coming, I shall proceed, in the

Third and last place, to speak to the Uncertainty of his coming; "For you know
"not what hour your LORD doth come."

There is a natural desire implanted in the minds of men to know and inquire into future events, and this the disciples were so sensible of, that they could not forbear examining into the time when the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the final consummation of
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all things, which were to be ushered in by the fearful signs our Saviour mentions in this Chapter should come to pass. That he would come to judge the world was not satisfactory, the exact time when he would come must likewise be attempted. But their curiosity we find was not satisfied; "You know not the hour," was all which he (who best knows what is fit for us) afforded them. All that was conducive to their interest here and hereafter had been revealed to them before. Why they should desire to know the time when CHRIST would come, when no other command lay upon them but to watch, and prepare for his coming; and when the Angels, nor the Son of Man himself knew, cannot be properly or reasonably conceived. That there is a time, an appointed time, when we must quit this earthly tabernacle is most certain; but then we should not perplex ourselves to calculate or find out the last minute of it.

Holy *David* indeed intreated God that he "might know the end, and the number of his days;" but he doth not mean so to calculate them, as to know the certain and

determined number of them. But so that in this little time that was allotted him he might be induced to press forward, and make his way to eternity.

To be sensible of our own frailty, and daily to perceive the gradual decay of our strength and vigour, and that we are drawing apace towards the grave, one would imagine should be the most prevailing motive, to make our calling and election sure in the other world. But to evil and wicked men, who harden themselves in iniquity, no evidence is clear enough, and light itself is darkness; what they naturally know, and what their conscience dictates to them, in that they corrupt themselves, and give a loose to all their vicious inclinations; whilst Reason, which should command, is postponed, and never attended to. After all the Judgments which fell upon *Pharaoh* and the land of *Egypt*, his heart was hardened still, till the Tyrant and his Host were overthrown in the sea together. No evidence can prevail, no terror can move the obdurate sinner. Tell the intemperate man the bad effects of his lusts, though he knows he shall
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be deceived, he will still go on in his evil course. Tell the Oppressor of the poor and fatherless, that he must one day severely account for his cruelty, yet he will not cease to "eat up the people, as the Psalmist expresses it, as he would eat bread." Who knows not that universal rule of justice, of "doing to all as they would they should do unto them," yet how few are there that put it in practice? Who knows not what his Duty is, and that "the wages of sin is death;" and yet how industriously do men pursue it? If therefore the thought of a future judgment cannot move us, the knowledge of it, provided it was fixed to a certain hour, would scarce awake us. We should either be such Infidels as not to believe it, or so obdurate as not to regard it: If we believe not *Moses* and the Prophets, who wrought so many miracles to confirm their divine mission, we should scarce give credit to an Angel that was sent on purpose to publish the time of a general Resurrection.

But since what has been premised is so plain,—the evidence so apparent,—since we
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are so fully convinced of CHRIST'S having been upon earth to redeem us, and that he will undoubtedly come to judge the world; and since the time of his coming is uncertain, how natural is it for every man who is a Christian,—that has any regard for his future well-being, to draw this conclusion—That he must therefore prepare for his coming; that is, use all manner of diligence and circumspection in the discharge of his Duty,—to be careful that no trumpet proclaim his Alms,—no Hypocrisy corrupt his Fast,—no unrepented sin sully his Prayers,—no wandering thought defile his Chastity,—no false fire kindle his Zeal, nor lukewarmness deaden his Devotion.—To this purpose, let him "keep his heart with all diligence,"—let him "stand in awe, and sin not;" that the world with all its pageantry, the flesh with all its lusts, and the devil with all his wiles, may not be able to ensnare him. Let him collect such Rules and observe such Directions, as may confirm him in his watch, and carry on his care and solicitude unto the end, and so not enter into temptation.

To this purpose let him acquaint himself
with

with the temptations themselves; let him so examine them as to be able to behold them in their proper and native colours; so that when he once comes to know his enemy, and sees through all his artificial disguises, he may with the greater ease subdue and conquer him. Let him only reflect what the pleasures this world affords are to the inconceivable joys of Heaven;—what a span of time a meer moment is to Eternity; how infinitely more advantageous it will be to us to watch and persevere a while, to strive and fight it out, than, by the impatience of one hour, to be a slave and miserable for ever.

Our blessed Saviour hath assured us, by his holy Spirit, that “no temptation shall
 “befal us which is beyond our natural
 “strength and the assistance of his Grace to
 “overcome.” If the Devil suggests evil thoughts, the Spirit inspires good ones; if the enemy begin to overpower us, let us only place our confidence in God, and his mercy will hold us up. “In all our trials,
 “in all time of our Tribulation, in all time
 “of our Wealth, in the hour of Death, and
 “in the day of Judgment, his Grace will
 “be sufficient for us.” Let

Let us therefore call upon him to be present with us and assist us in our watch. Let us "gird up our loins and keep our lights burning," that in the last day and hour, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, and so be found an acceptable people in his sight; to whom, with the Father and the holy Spirit be, as is most due, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, both now henceforth and for evermore. Amen.



S E R M O N VI.



ROMANS XV. 5.

Now the GOD of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to CHRIST JESUS.

 T would be endless to account for the many blessings which attend brethren that live together in unity. Without doubt our own experience or observation hath convinced us of some of the happy effects of living together in the bond of peace, under a mutual Benevolence and Fidelity; and performing all the good offices which may any ways contribute towards the preservation and establishment of so happy, so desirable a correspondence. I need not observe to you, that the welfare and prosperity of States and Kingdoms, and
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the interest and peace of private Societies, are never better secured, than where such an harmony—such an agreement hath diffused itself. For when men come to be thus inseparably attached, and all combine in the prosecution of one and the same end, the Public Good; when they come to be so affectionately concerned one for the other, that "when one member suffers, all the others bear a part and suffer with it;" when such a joint concurrence, I say, with respect to their public views, and such a tender regard for the well-being of each other displays itself, it would be absurd even to imagine that a people under so happy an uniformity of temper and affections, did not enjoy all that inward Peace and Composure, as well as those outward blessings of Wealth and Prosperity, which must inseparably attend such a disposition.

And if these are some of the benefits of a political union, of persons confederate together in one common secular Interest, what a peculiar happiness must it be for a Nation or People, with the same earnestness and sincerity, with the same zeal and integrity, with the

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the same unity and concurrence, to prosecute their Spiritual Interest in the public worship and service of God. When they come together "with one heart, and one mouth to glorify God," to offer up their petitions to the Throne of Grace, as the several occasions of the prayers direct, and endeavour at such a disposition of mind as may most incline them duly and seriously to attend upon God throughout the whole time of their devotion? What a near resemblance would such a behaviour, in the congregation of the Saints on earth, have to the Hallelujahs, Praises, and Thanksgivings of the Saints above? How nearly would an Assembly of Christians thus employed in the height and flame of Devotion imitate the adoration of the Angelic Host when they prostrate themselves before the throne of the Lamb, and chant forth the praises of their great Creator? In what a literal sense would they be said "to worship God in the beauty of Holiness, and to give thanks unto him in the Congregation from the ground of the heart." What blessings might not such a people expect from their frequent addresses to the supreme Being, and the purity of their Devotion?

Devotion? We are assured that God has promised to be in the midst of such a congregation, not only to assist them in their prayers, but likewise to grant their petitions: and therefore they may depend upon his goodness for every thing that is requisite to their external welfare, for his assistance and consolation under any temporal affliction, for his Grace and Succour under any temptation; and what is yet infinitely above all these advantages, for a reception after death into those ineffable joys which he hath promised to the Faithful.

St *Paul*, from whom the prayer or benediction in the Text proceeds, though he had spared no pains in the discharge of his ministerial function, foresaw that all his labors would be in vain, unless God, the Author of all good gifts, would be pleased to crown them by inclining the hearts of those whom he had converted to the faith of CHRIST to Peace and Unity. He had before in this Epistle made use of the best reasons, and most persuasive arguments, in order to bring about this happy change. What now remained was to recommend the good event

event of his labours, by his prayers to that God by whose commission he had planted and watered, and who alone was able to give the increase. And indeed it was highly necessary for the Apostle to intreat the aid of the supreme Being at this time, because of the breach there was in the Church that was then at *Rome*; which, if it had not been timely prevented, by the good Providence of God, in all probability would have grown wider, to the great scandal of their profession, the dishonor of God, and the grief and concern of all good men. St *Paul* therefore, that he might not run or labor in vain, after he had used all the rhetoric he was master of, in order to heal their divisions, begs of God to complete the work, and finish their sanctification, by infusing into their hearts the Spirit of Peace, and representing to their minds the blessed effects of those that live together in love and unity. " Now the God of patience and consolation, " says he, grant you to be like-minded one " towards another according to CHRIST " JESUS."

From which words I shall observe,

VOL. I.

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First,

First, What that *like-mindedness* which the Apostle here prays is.

Secondly, How much we are obliged to exercise it one towards another.

First then, I am to observe what that *like-mindedness* which the Apostle here prays for is.

Which, if we have recourse only to the two Chapters preceding the Text, we may be easily informed of. It seems the difference that at this time subsisted between the Christian converts at *Rome*, which were partly Jews and partly Gentiles, arose from matters in themselves merely indifferent, about the eating and abstaining from certain meats, and the observing or not observing particular days. And these distinctions were carried to that height, that they created a reciprocal hatred and contempt for each other; he who was not so curious as to abstain from eating meats which another disapproved of, was sure to incur his censure and indignation. He who confined himself from *all* in general, and fed only upon herbs, grew into the contempt of those who observed a contrary diet.

Thus

Thus from things in themselves purely indifferent, the peace of the Church began to be interrupted, and, if the Apostle had not timely interposed, and the Grace of God happily united them, the members of that Church had been members of an Harlot, and all the instructions and labours of the Apostle had been vain and ineffectual.

Indeed these different observations, as they were built upon no points of Doctrine or essential Articles of that Religion into which they were now initiated, that is, as they were neither commanded nor prohibited by God in the Gospel covenant, of themselves could not have been able to have disturbed the peace and unity of the Church, if they had been content with their own particular observations. But when each was so zealous and fond of his own observances, and one grew into the contempt of the other upon this account, in all probability this disgust would have shewed itself in other and more material distinctions; and their resentments might have carried them so far as to have made them to differ from one

another in points of Religion, and so become heterodox in practice.

The Apostle therefore represents the great danger of this behavior, how contrary it was to the genius of their profession, and how unworthy the name by which they were called. He intreats them, that for meats and such like indifferent distinctions, which were no part of their Religion, they would not destroy the work of God. By which he means their conversion to the Faith of CHRIST: And assures them, that every one was at liberty, both Jews and Gentiles, either to eat or abstain, in these respects, provided he did it with suitable circumstances, and without giving offence, without grieving or hurting the conscience of their weak Brethren. Nay, he lays it down as a Rule to be observed by the Gentile Christians, who were well satisfied of the indifferency of these things, that notwithstanding they ought not to abuse this liberty, but to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves. And as for himself he declares in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, in a case of the like nature, that rather than he would

use this liberty to the offence of his Christian Brethren, he would quite abridge himself of all meats in general. For, as he adds, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend." In short, the whole scope of the Apostle's reasoning seems to be directed to the Jewish Converts, who were so tenacious of the legal observances, that they separated themselves from the communion of the Gentile Christians, purely because they refused to be circumcised, and did not keep the Law. He takes a great deal of pains to assure them that those rites, which were the cause of this dissension, were now abrogated by the coming of CHRIST, and that what was matter of obligation before, now ceased; and therefore exhorts them both to make use of their liberty, without giving offence either to the other. That he that was a Judaical Christian would not censure or judge the Gentile, because he did not conform to his sentiments; or he that was a Gentile Believer, would not despise or vilify the Jewish, purely because he was so scrupulously nice in matters which did not require it.

Thus by observing the Apostle's method of arguing, and the great care he takes to close these divisions, we may be informed what this like-mindedness is which he prays in the Text they would exercise one towards another, according to JESUS CHRIST. Indeed this particular phrase of speech, though it occurs in no other part of Scripture, is often made use of by *St Paul* in his Epistles. *St Peter* has one particular expression in the third chapter of his first Epistle ; which comes very near it, which is this ; " Finally, " be ye all of one mind." Now though this may seem to denote only an agreement or unity of opinion and judgment, and though by this the Apostle only exhorted those that professed the Faith of CHRIST, that they would agree in the truth of his holy Word : yet it is often taken in a larger and more extensive sense, and supposed to include not only that unity of our understanding, but likewise the due and uniform execution of all those Duties, which we are severally obliged to, exercise towards each other in our outward behaviour and conversation ; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, in our most excellent Liturgy of " living together in unity and god-ly

ly love." It is this that composes that perfect and blessed unity which the Apostle so fervently prays for in the Text, and it is this, as we are members of CHRIST, we are obliged to seek after and pursue, and is the highest instance of conviction that we are truly "members one of another." For it were a lame and imperfect performance of our Duty, if our care extended no farther than to avoid division in points of Faith and Doctrine, without considering the true ends and benefits of Society.

St *Paul* has so elegantly described the mutual dependence of the mystical Body of CHRIST, by the sympathy and supply that is between the members of the natural one, that no one who considers that carefully can be ignorant of the great advantages which must accrue from such a disposition. There he tells us, that in the body natural, where the meanest and most despicable member suffers, or is in anguish, all the other members bear a part, and suffer with it. No terms of superiority are then insisted on,—no terms of defiance heard, but all are ready to contribute their joint supplies according

to their several abilities, to ease and relieve the distempered part ; and then comes the reason for this sympathy, that there should be no Schism in the body, and that the members should have the same care one for the other. And indeed this should be the joint concern of us Christians, as we are Fellow-Brethren, Servants of the same family, and of the household of Faith ; as we are fed at one table, and eat " the same spiritual meat, " and drink the same spiritual drink." Nothing, one would imagine, should be a more prevailing motive for us to endeavor to keep " the unity of the Spirit in the bond of " Peace," than considering one another under such mutual ties, such endearing obligations.

And as nothing can be urged of a more forcible nature to induce us to " love as Brethren," and prevent those needless broils and divisions, which too frequently arise amongst us, and disturb the unity of the Church. I shall only recommend the due consideration of this particular, and conclude this Head with that excellent advice which *Moses* gave to his two contending countrymen,

countrymen, when no other argument^{could} avail: "Sirs, ye are Brethren, why do ye
"wrong one to another?"

I shall now proceed to observe how much it is our Duty to exercise this blessed disposition one towards another, according to the command of JESUS CHRIST.

In all civil Societies it is a Duty incumbent on every member to promote, all that in him lies, the good and interest of that community to which he belongs. This is universally apparent from the nature and constitution of Society itself, which doth necessarily presuppose a confederate and joint endeavor of particular persons to pursue what is most conducive to the welfare and prosperity of that body whereof they are members. The least deviation or obliquity from this, though in a single person, disturbs the peace of the body Politic, and infringes on the laws of Society. And therefore human Prudence, to prevent the continuance of such disturbances, occasioned by this obliquity, hath enacted particular Laws for the punishment of those, who act against
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the Peace, and disturb the good order of Government, which must necessarily be upheld and preside among men. In the most uncivilized parts of the world, proper care is taken to punish and prevent abuses of this nature; and the lawless and disobedient in this respect, however they escape with impunity in others, are made sensible of the sword of Justice, and the arm of secular Power: So that there seems to be a kind of harmony and correspondence established as it were by a law of nature, though composed with different circumstances, and observed by different capacities throughout the whole inhabitable world.

And indeed, considered as such, one might expect that every particular member should pay his obedience to so reasonable an Institution; and devote his endeavors to preserve and secure the peace of it; and that "not only for wrath," (that is for fear of punishment) "but also for conscience sake," as it is an Institution agreeable to the nature and condition of men, and well-pleasing to God. For as he is the Author of Peace and Unity, so he must be pleased when his creatures

tures endeavour to imitate him in this particular ; when he sees that they " follow after " the things which make for Peace, and " things wherewith they may edify one " another."

There cannot certainly be a more happy frame of mind than that which is thus conversant in brotherly love, nor a more engaging one to draw down on us the blessings and favors of the supreme Being. We are assured that this is one of the great characteristics of the Christian Religion, and so highly esteemed in the sight of God, that he has been pleased to make it the grand test of our Love and Obedience to him, that " he who loveth God, love his brother " also." And it is to the performance or non-performance of this particular branch of our Duty in all its several parts, that we are intitled to the blessings, or obnoxious to the punishments, denounced in Scripture. And indeed were the instructions we find there duly observed by us, we could not fail of applying them properly, both with regard to our neighbor and ourselves. And though through human frailty, there
are

are and must needs be offences in the world, which may make this Deity more difficult and uneasy, yet, if we bear in mind only the dictates of our Profession, and carry about with us those holy instructions, we shall never be at a loss how to behave. Though we sojourn in a vale of misery, where many and unforeseen crosses and misfortunes attack us; many troubles and vexations, through the intercourse of life attend us, yet the God of all comfort has assured us by his word, if we bear them with patience and meekness, that he "will not suffer" the patient abiding of the meek to perish "for ever." Though we are exposed to manifold injuries, obloquies and sufferings, without any cause or fault of our own, yet if we recommend ourselves to his care, and not seek for a redress by ways and means that do not become us, he, in his own good time, will avenge us of our adversaries, and rid us of wicked men.

Besides, this behavior will be such an evidence of our sincerity, and so clear a conviction of our living conformably to the Rules of our Profession, that others, who
are

are witnesses of it, may be induced by our example to pursue, in the same manner, the ways of Peace and Holiness.

But after all, the work of a Christian does not end here; after he has by a suitable life and conversation let his light shine before men, he must, according to the example of the Apostle in the Text, privately and publicly, that is in his Closet and the Church, devoutly intreat the God of all patience and consolation, that all his endeavors to promote the cause of Truth and Peace may be rendered effectual, by permitting his Grace to descend on those in whose behalf, and for whose sake he thus supplicates and intreats it. He must likewise pray for the continuance of his Grace upon himself, and beg his assistance under every temptation, that all the several duties in his Christian calling, and his own particular vocation, may be discharged to the honour of God, and the benefit of his Brethren, and Kinsmen in the Flesh. This will be the only means of restoring that true Religion and Unity of worship, which was intended by the prescribed form of our Liturgy, and which must be
highly

highly agreeable and well-pleasing to God. And as there cannot be a more seasonable or proper opportunity to recommend the Peace of *Jerusalem* to our care, than at this time, when we are assembled together to worship and give thanks unto the Lord; all that I shall farther add is, to intreat the concurrence of every member of CHRIST's mystical Body to this end, in that most affecting and pathetic language of *St Paul* to his *Philippian* Converts, with which I shall conclude—" If therefore there be any consolation in CHRIST, any comfort of love;—
" if any fellowship of the Spirit;—if any
" bowels and mercies;—fulfil ye my joy,
" that you be like-minded;—having the
" same love;—being of one accord, and of
" one mind."



S E R M O N



S E R M O N VII.



EPHESIANS iv. 32.

*Forgiving one another, even as God
for CHRIST's sake hath forgiven
you.*

~~THE~~ ~~whole~~ ~~verse~~ ~~runs~~ ~~thus,~~ " And
T " be ye kind one to another,
" tender-hearted, forgiving one
" another, even as God for
" CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you."

The former part of this verse, and indeed all the preceding one, seems calculated for the better recommendation of the great Duty of Christian Forgiveness. In the one the Apostle very carefully specifies those Vices which would undoubtedly hinder the performance of this Duty, and therefore earnestly intreats his *Ephesian* Converts, that these

these may be " put away from them with
" all malice : " in the other, he very patheti-
cally recommends a mutual affection, that
they would " be kind one to another, and
" tender-hearted," as the best qualifications
for the observance of that which follows,
" forgiving one another, even as God for
" CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you."

In speaking to these words I shall endeavor, *First*, To shew the nature and extent of Forgiveness, as it stands declared a Duty of Christianity; and to take some care to prevent or remove the most common and dangerous mistakes about it.

Secondly, I shall observe that Revenge, or a return of Injuries, whatever may be pretended, as it has no true foundation in Religion; so neither has it in natural Reason.

And *lastly*, I shall lay down some Rules for our better direction, that we may not impose upon ourselves in the practice of this Duty, by vainly imagining we perform it, when indeed we do not.

First

First then, I am to consider the nature and extent of Forgiveness as it stands declared a Duty of Christianity; and to take some care to remove the most common and dangerous mistakes about it.

And here by the word *Forgiveness*, we are not only to understand a disposition or temper of mind to suppress all inclinations or desires of Revenge within, but to be likewise very cautious and circumspect in our outward behaviour, to do all that in us lies (whatever temptations we may have to the contrary) to restrain or prevent any injurious return whatever in our practice. Because as Forgiveness, especially a christian Forgiveness, infers a reconciliation to the injurious person; so likewise does it imply a propensity of doing him all the good offices of Humanity and Christian Charity. For the same law that enjoins our Forgiveness of Injuries, doth also command us to put in execution all those acts of Benevolence which are due from us, both as we are Men and as we are Christians.

As to the first part of this Duty, namely,

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of attaining a disposition or temper of mind to suppress all inclinations or desires of Revenge within; this is often left to our own conduct and regulation, which if carefully and duly disposed, necessarily produces all those happy effects, which inseparably attends so wise, so prudent a cultivation of the mind.

And indeed here it is that the good or evil, the virtues or vices of human Nature take their rise, and first shew themselves in their respective influences. And if the root, the inward spring and principle from whence all our actions flow, be rotten and vicious; a man's life is poisoned in the very fountain of it, and the streams and issues which descend from thence, must inevitably communicate the same taint and corruption throughout all the several branches.

But more particularly so, if a revengeful temper, or an implacable malice reigns within us, for at such a time the soul is entirely diverted from its religious observances, and rendered utterly incapable of performing those acts of Devotion and Charity in which the

the very life of a Christian does consist, It is for this reason our blessed Saviour, when he pointed out the principal lines of a Christian temper, proposes for our imitation a meek and lowly habit of mind, if we ever intend to be *like* Him either in holiness or happiness. "Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." And indeed it is next to impossible for any one who has this temper once fixed and rooted in his soul, to miscarry, so far as to offend in this particular Duty of Christian Forgiveness. For it is the peculiar province of Meekness, when Anger or Resentment seizes us, to regulate our passions in their rise and motion, either by intirely suppressing them, or at the least prescribing laws to their progress, and confining them within the bounds of Reason and Religion.

This therefore must be our principal aim; this the chief corner-stone whereon we must rear our own peace and tranquillity, as well as our obedience and conformity to the precept in my Text. This must be the great preparative, ere our passions begin to ope-

rate, or they must prove inordinate and irregular, because there being nothing to confine their progress, nothing to restrain the force and hurry of those affronts and injuries we meet with here, but our own corrupt nature, and that too assisted by the ill customs of others, every little disgust will kindle a resentment, every resentment raise a passion, and every passion beget a revenge. Hence will follow all those ill consequences which have ever been the great reproaches of Christianity, and the standing marks of our disobedience to that Religion which we only profess and not practise. And it is certain if this temper be not timely broken, if we do not resist it in its rise and origin, it will be impossible that we should ever bow our necks to the yoke of CHRIST. "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted that are far from righteousness," says God by the Prophet *Isaiab*, intimating the wide distance this sin will always make between him and us; and so for ever block up all our approaches to Heaven and Happiness.

But here perhaps it may be objected, that, by virtue of this precept we are not only to forbear

forbear all manner of injurious returns, or
 revengeful practices ; but are likewise forbid
 to harbour the least anger or resentment,
 whatever reasons or provocations we may
 meet with to the contrary. Because as an-
 ger or resentment is certainly the cause from
 whence our revenge proceeds, so to put in
 execution either the one or the other must
 be equally criminal. For if we are com-
 manded to shun and avoid every appearance
 of evil, how much more ought we to ab-
 stain from the very cause whence this evil
 proceeds ? But here it must be observed,
 that it is not against Anger in its own nature
 that I am now pleading ; (for it is possible, and
 I hope very possible, we may " be angry and
 " sin not ;") but it is against the inordi-
 nacy and irregularity of it in point of
 time ; when it has passed the due period,
 and transgressed those bounds the Apostle
 has set it, and from a transport of passion
 grows into a settled state and habit of the
 soul. And when it has once made this pro-
 gress, it becomes exorbitant and sinful. No
 violence of passion, no aggravation of cir-
 cumstances, will be an excuse for its extra-
 vagance.

To this, it is possible, it may be objected, that as there is certainly a difference in the tempers and complexions of men, so likewise must there be in the passions and resentments that arise from them. And therefore, by virtue of this distinction, it should seem impossible but some men must offend against this general rule laid down by the Apostle, of commanding our wrath down with the sun. This may prove a difficult task to the meek and gentle, according to the degrees and circumstances of the injuries they receive, and how much more so to the froward and passionate, to the stiff and inflexible. Is it possible that the one should overcome the tumult and hurry of his passions within the same compass of time with the other; when such a vast difference, so great an inequality in every respect appears to be between them?

But here again let it be remembered, that though there is an indisputable difference in the tempers and complexions of men, yet all are equally concerned in the performance of this Duty; and though some, by reason of their obstinacy and perverseness, are less capable

capable of observing the due period of their passion, or at least of subduing it in such a proportion of time; yet, in the main, this will be no excuse, if we do not endeavor, nay actually contend and strive to overcome it. And indeed the Apostle's intention by this Rule was, that we should not for a longer space suffer harsh and angry reflections to possess our souls without care, or but choke and stifle them in the very rise, lest if we should indulge them in their first apprehension, our passions should begin to gather strength, and hurry us into unlawful practices. And if we do but carefully execute this, and pursue our contest, by the Grace of God, and his Blessing on our endeavors, we shall ere long be more than conquerors over our unruly passions.

But then is there no allowance to be made with regard to the quality of the injuries we receive? *Talis fit ultio, qualis est injuria*, was an old heathen maxim. And though this retaliation is not warrantable now, though our anger must not be proportioned to the injury received, yet at least our resentments may. And though Christianity restrains

and forbids the practice of the one, yet certainly we may be allowed the liberty of the other. This indeed is very reasonable, our resentments may be proportioned to the quality and greatness of the offence, when all other circumstances will admit of it. But notwithstanding this, there is no difference to be made in point of time. Our passions may act with the greater violence whilst they are under a sense of the injuries, but they must not exceed the time limited by the Apostle; "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." There is no reserve, no exception to be made to this Rule, whether the injury be greater or less, whether the complexion be mild or gentle, stubborn or inflexible.

The sum therefore of what has been said is this; that all men are indispensably obliged, by the laws of Christianity, to forgive the injuries and offences of others within a small space of time after they have suffered them; and every particular person is under the same obligation of putting it in execution, as soon as his own temper, and the circumstances of the injuries he has received, will admit of it.

Thus

Thus far I have explained the nature of Forgiveness as it regards the inward temper and complexion of our souls. I shall now proceed to speak of it as it lays a restraint upon our outward actions, and forbids us any manner of injurious returns whatever in our practice,

For so far, it is certain, we are forbid by the general tenor of the Gospel, and the nature of this Duty in particular, to do any thing from a principle of Revenge; to design the hurt or prejudice of any one purely because he has hurt or prejudiced us. In whatsoever capacity, whatsoever particular: though we have suffered under the extremest provocations, and been aggravated perhaps with the highest degree of malice or ingratitude; yet all is not sufficient to warrant an action of this nature.

This, I am sensible, some will say is a very severe law, and what grates too harshly upon flesh and blood. But let them remember it is no more than what our blessed Lord himself submitted to; and that as it is enjoined by him, it is indispensably our Duty to

to obey it. It is his doctrine, and what he practised himself, and dare we be offended at it? We may possibly object against it indeed, and our practice may induce us to credit our own objections; but this will be no prejudice against an express law of CHRIST, a clear Duty of the Gospel. And that what I am speaking of is such, and comes under this explication of it which I have given, we have as full and express authority of CHRIST and his Apostles to prove, as we have for any thing else. "Resist not evil," says our blessed Saviour. "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." "Render not evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing," says the Apostle. Besides many other passages to the same effect, all which do very plainly prohibit any injurious return under the severest provocations.

And the reason why they do so is as clear; because Vengeance is a right that God Almighty has reserved only to himself; and therefore if we dare assume it we invade his property. "Dearly Beloved," says the Apostle,

posse, "avenge not yourselves, but rather
"give place unto wrath; for Vengeance is
"mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

We are indeed in many cases allowed to prevent or redress an injury, but in none to return it; we are permitted to provide for our own good, and when provided for to use all proper methods to preserve it; methods that may be put in execution without any the least violation of the laws of God, or contradiction of those, which, as men, we are indispensably obliged to observe towards each other. Neither our humanity, nor our profession will be dishonored, if we go not beyond these Rules. If when we seek only to repair an Injury, without conceiving any evil towards our neighbor, without having any particular regard to the principles or motives whence the Injuries proceeded: neither will our conscience accuse us of having deviated from the known Rules of our profession, nor our fellow-creatures condemn us for having been too forward, too rigorous or severe in our demands of Justice. For the formal reason of an injury lies in this, in the design a man con-
ceives

ceives to hurt his Brother by any outward action; but he that intends merely to right and defend himself, if the cause be sufficient to warrant such an intention, may do so very lawfully, and without being really injurious to any one.

It is true indeed another man's inconvenience, nay perhaps his ruin, may follow upon the reparation of the damage I suffer by him. But upon a supposition that the loss and mischief I must otherwise lie under if I do not maintain or recover my right be very considerable, though the ruin of my adversary should follow, it is not my fault, because it was not in my design, and I should rather have chosen, if possible, to have secured myself without the trouble or hazard of my neighbor. So that though the evils my adversary suffers be indeed the consequence of my action, yet they do not come under the nature and notion of an injury from me, because they were not so intended.

If the damage indeed and inconvenience my neighbor receives by my action, in pursuance of my right, does exceedingly overbalance

balance the advantages I may possibly receive by the reparation. Christian charity should interpose in this case, and prevail with me rather to sustain the Injury, than seek to right myself so much to another's prejudice.

I shall proceed now,

Secondly, To observe that Revenge, or a return of Injuries, as it has no true foundation in Religion, so neither has it in natural Reason.

The former hypothesis is sufficiently exploded by the whole tenor of the Gospel. And therefore when men plead for it, as in some cases they do very warmly, they must proceed upon this supposition, That Revenge ever was and is still a right and principle of human Nature; however it is now bound up and restrained by the laws of Christianity. This, however plausible it may appear to minds truly insensible of the rights and properties of human Nature, has nothing to support it but corrupt Custom, and the general tendency of mankind this way. For to presume that this principle
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was inherent in our first Parent immediately after his Creation, to say that God, when he had stamped the title of *Good* upon all his works, (which we must do to prove this an inherent right of Nature) did, amongst the several other excellencies with which he dignified man, include this, were a manifest Impiety. If, therefore, without having recourse so far into the right and origin of Nature, we shall make it appear that Revenge, in the necessary consequence of it, contradicts a true natural original inclination; I hope it may be allowed not to be *natural* in itself; because true Nature never appears with a contrariety of principles, and by consequence is never at odds or variance with itself.

If therefore a love or inclination to Society be a true and genuine principle of Nature; if it be necessary to improve and manifest the tender regards which rational creatures, above all other Beings, are commanded to observe to each other, then certainly Revenge (that is, private Revenge) must be utterly inconsistent with this principle; not only as it is a direct contradiction to the principle

principle itself, but as it tends to subvert the grand fundamental upon which every Society, that is, the Peace and Interest thereof, must principally depend. For no Society can subsist without Government, in which there must of necessity be a subordination of inferiors to a superior power; and there can be no such subordination as this, where every one will determine for himself; repay Injuries, — distribute Punishments, — and violently assume the reins of Government, without any deference or respect to a Superior; so that government is here plainly superseded in the chief business of its employment; the main end for which Society was instituted disappointed; and consequently, there being no farther use of it, or business for it, must utterly dissolve. So that it is evident, if a love of Society be a natural inclination, that private Revenge can have no true foundation in Nature any more than it has in Christianity.

But farther; if Revenge did proceed from the pure and uncorrupt spring of Nature; if we could suppose it one of the genuine principles which God, at man's first setting out

out in the world, did invest him with, how comes it to pass, that this is so expressly contradicted throughout the whole tenor of the Gospel? Either the one or the other must be false. If God did ordain *this* a true and inherent right of Nature, then what is said in Scripture in contradiction to this right, must either not be said or dictated by God; or if it is, it must imply a contradiction, at least an imperfection in the Divinity. For to grant a privilege to Nature in its original course and tendency, and to permit the exercise of this privilege from the Being of our first Parent till the Promulgation of the Gospel, (which time one would think should be a sufficient sanction for the use of it;) is something as unaccountable as it is derogatory from the Goodness and Mercy of that supreme Being whom we never had the least reason to tax with Injustice or Mal-Administration.

It is true, indeed, by the corruption of Nature, this principle soon spread itself into a wide circumference, and not only private opinions, but the voice of nations had confirmed the use of it. But then this was at a
time

time when the world, at least the Gentile part of it, was quite covered over with darkness and confusion; and without the least guide or direction from a revealed Religion. Where all the light that could be struck out in so many ages by the utmost pains of men, and those too of the greatest abilities, amounted to little more than a faint suspicion of some Truths, which, because they were not able by the force of natural reason clearly to prove, they did not think themselves under any necessity of believing. The Being of a God, and the Immortality of the soul, though they were contested for many ages, as being apprehended of the greatest consequence to the government of mens lives, yet were never cleared up to any tolerable advantage, or explained upon such principles of reason, especially in those darker ages of the world, as could engage a firm assent or adherence to them. How far their Reason and Philosophy did prevail in this particular instance of Forgiveness, we may very well be convinced from the accounts of their wisest and most ancient Philosophers. Some, we find, openly declare against it, as a Vice in morals, or an Imperfection in Nature.

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And

And though we cannot say this was the general opinion of those times, yet even those who had made the farthest inquiries into the nature of Forgiveness, even so far as to conclude it a kind of Duty, and fit for some reasons to be observed, do yet give in such lame and imperfect descriptions of it, as sufficiently shew either that they were not satisfied with their own reasoning, or that they wanted zeal to establish the observance of it.

And if we look into the *Mosaic Law*, which was an elevation of Nature as it then stood corrupted, to a pitch above its own reach, we shall find the case not much the better. For *this Law* so far consulted the weakness of Nature, and made such concessions to the corruptions and infirmities of men, as were not at all consistent with Duties of so high and spiritual a kind as these were. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was, it seems, a principle amongst that people, that could plead the authority of ancient days, and the prescription of ages. Which so very gross corruption, could never have prevailed so far

far with people who were so well acquainted with the *Mosaic* Law, if there had not been some countenance, or at least some occasion given for it, from liberties in this point not only allowed, but even authorized in the body of the law itself. And though God was pleased to pass by the ignorance of those times,—to pardon the frequent transgressions of a natural and necessary Duty, in mercy to the infirmities of men; this, I hope, does not prove forgiveness of Injuries no Duty at all, or indeed ever the less so upon this account; and yet in those ages it must naturally have been none if Revenge had been naturally lawful; for it could have been no man's duty to forgive, if every man had a right to punish.

Christianity, therefore, in this case, whatsoever we may think, doth not in the least divest us of any privilege which we ever enjoyed before; and when it commands us with so great authority, and with such high penalties, to *resist not evil*; to make no farther use of Injuries, but to take them patiently; or, if it be consistent with Christian Charity, to endeavor to repair them in such

a manner that we do not infringe upon the laws of our Profession; this is no more than what we were ever obliged to do upon the score of humanity, however we may erroneously think to the contrary. Forgiveness is therefore no new Commandment; it is, saith St *John*, an old Commandment, a Law of natural Religion, established upon necessary and immutable reasons;—upon God's government of the World; and Man's duty and subjection to Him. But then it is again a new Commandment, in that our blessed LORD, by the clearer Revelations of the Gospel, has more fully brought to light the nature, and extent, and obligation of it, has explained it to greater advantage; and has enjoined it upon reasons and motives peculiar to himself and his Religion.

It was necessary to consider this point a little largely, in order to expose the opinion of those men who will not be persuaded but that private Revenge is a true principle of Nature; who therefore look upon that Duty of Forgiveness, which lays such a firm restraint upon it, as a cramp and incroachment upon our natural Liberty! Such a

comes

comes to ravish Nature from its original course and tendency; and goes about to subvert the very fundamental principles of our being.

From hence therefore I shall proceed, in the *last* place, to lay down some Rules for our better direction, that we may not impose upon ourselves in the practice of this Duty, by vainly imagining we perform it when indeed we do not.

And first then, it is certain we do not forgive our enemy as we ought, if when there only appears a formal and outward reconciliation, we conceal the lurking embers of a secret malice, which, when time and opportunity shall serve, the fiery coals of our resentment shall shew themselves, and the flame that lay hid under the deceitful ashes of an outward behaviour, rage with the utmost fury and violence. How extremely cautious therefore ought we to be when we have been so good as to forgive an Injury, and to forgive it in such a temper as a Christian ought, from our hearts and inmost affections,—to preserve the same hap-

py and sincere disposition; and by frequent and habitual acts of Charity and Mercy to render ourselves, as it were, incapable either of causing or returning Injuries. In this temper how nearly should we imitate our blessed LORD and Master, who bore the repeated contumelies of the Jews with the same easy, calm and unruffled mind. Who always had it in his power to revenge the affronts that were offered him, yet would never suffer himself to put it in execution. How admirably well herein would our practice accord with our profession; and what an influence would such a behaviour have upon the minds of those who have not so learned CHRIST? Whose highest excellence it has been, when Injuries have occurred, to quiet their present passion, and put on the formal appearance of Forgiveness, upon reasons perhaps of fear or interest; from which, when once they were disengaged, how soon has their vengeance shewed itself, by closing in with the first opportunity of letting loose their passion on those from whom the Injury proceeded. Scarce a day, or an hour passes but instances of this nature happen, notwithstanding that severe declaration of
our

our blessed LORD. " So likewise shall my
 " heavenly Father do also unto you ;" that
 is, deliver us over to condemnation, " if ye
 " from your hearts forgive not every one
 " his Brother their trespasses." What ex-
 cuses men can form, or what hopes of par-
 don they can entertain for the breach of so
 clear, so explicit a precept, I cannot ima-
 gine. Ignorance, I am sure, they cannot
 plead, where every thing relating to this
 particular Duty is so plainly set forth in the
 holy Gospel ; and Inconsideration will ra-
 ther inance their guilt than mitigate their
 punishment.

But, *secondly*, we may certainly know we
 do not forgive our enemy as we ought,
 though we abstain from any injurious acts
 towards him, if yet we take a pleasure in
 his misfortunes, and rejoice when calamities
 befall him. For next to the doing mischief
 ourselves, there is no more certain indication
 of a base, invenomed, cankered spirit, than
 to rejoice in the success of evils coming on him
 from abroad. The law of Forgiveness is
 charged so home upon the consciences of men,
 and is so very express and peremptory in itself,

that none can take this liberty without a violation of their Charity. And if they can purchase a little ill-natured pleasure at so dear a rate as that, they may at length find it is a great sin so to do, and will in the end prove their greatest unhappiness.

But here, perhaps, it may be objected, that if my enemy comes to suffer without my fault, if I am altogether ignorant or unassisting in the misfortunes that befall him, if the hand of Providence should strike him, or the consequences of his own folly overtake him, may I not then solace myself to think that Heaven has at last found the wretch out, and that Vengeance has at length overtaken him? For this, say they, is only giving into the issues of Providence, and rejoicing to see the decrees of Heaven so duly directed, and so justly executed? But this behaviour, however we may interpret it, or whatever influence it may have upon the minds of men, is only the effect of an uncharitable unchristian temper. God Almighty has commanded, and our Religion expects from us a quite different behaviour towards our enemy: we ought to assist him,

him, and not mock at his calamity; we should endeavor to ease, and not triumph in his misfortunes. " Rejoice not, says Solomon, when thine enemy falleth, nor let thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the LORD see it, and it displeaseth him, and he turn away his wrath from him." This, we see, was contrary to the very Charity of a Jew; and how then can we think it consistent with the mercy and forgiveness of a Christian?

But, *thirdly*, Though we neither suffer our Revenge to appear in practice, or expose it by our discourse; though we never speak of our enemy but with a seeming tenderness, from an apprehension probably of being thought indecent or offensive, yet if, when an opportunity offers of doing him an injury, and that so secretly, as he shall never know it, we shall close in with it; it is certain our Charity was never well grounded; and that our pretended affection, was nothing more than a ceremonious preface to introduce our Revenge. And however secure we may imagine ourselves to be in this particular, yet God, who seeth in secret, to whom

whom all the thoughts of our hearts are manifest, discovers the wicked motives by which we are set to work, and at the same time we pronounce our pretended blessings sees real curses writ upon our hearts.

To every such offender therefore, may we not justly suppose God to take up the like exprobatation with that recorded in the fifty second Psalm, where holy *David* prophetically foretels in the person of *Dag* the *Edomite*, the severe punishment due to this sin; and having specified the particulars of his offence in the fourth and fifth verses, he concludes, "Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever; he shall take thee and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living?"

No one, certainly, that lives under the least apprehension of the consequence of such actions, can, without a secret horror, read this severe denunciation, much more offend against it. And therefore he that has once taken this method, he who has heretofore "imagined mischief in his heart, and stirred up strife all the day long," for
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the future let him "set a watch before his
 "mouth, and keep the door of his lips,"
 let his tongue, that has hitherto been sharp-
 ened like that of a serpent, and his lips,
 which have so long concealed the poison of
 adders, be employed in every good word and
 work: let him, with holy David, beg of
 God, that his "heart be not inclined to any
 "evil thing," that he be not "occupied in
 "ungodly works with the men that work
 "wickedness." Let him, whenever he is
 tempted to return an Injury, though in the
 most secret manner, and under the extremest
 provocation, ask himself the same question
 with that of *Joseph*, "How shall I do this
 "great wickedness, and sin against God?"
 And I make no doubt but the same God,
 that empowered the one to resist the tempta-
 tion, will also make a way for the other to
 escape. Besides, this will be such an evi-
 dence to ourselves that we are sincere in our
 Religion, as will strike us with such a secret
 comfort, that none but God and our own
 souls will be conscious of.

Thus shall we be free and undisturbed with
 those passions which are the inseparable at-
 tendants

tendants on a contrary temper; and amidst all the occurrences of life we shall enjoy an evenness and tranquillity, as is not to be equaled here on earth: and after our departure hence, the nobler part of us shall ascend to those glorious regions of Almighty God, where perfect Harmony, Love and Peace inhabit, where are endless Joys, and at whose right hand are Pleasures for evermore.

SERMON
tendants



S E R M O N VIII.



MATT. xiv. 28, 29, 30.

LORD, if it be thou, bid me come
unto thee on the water. And
he said, Come. And when Peter
was come down out of the ship, he
walked on the water to go to Jesus.
But when he saw the wind boiste-
rous, he was afraid: and beginning
to sink, he cried, LORD, save me.

HERE appears to have been such
a mixture of zeal and irresolution
in the conduct and character of
Peter, that it may seem at first sight unac-
countable why our blessed LORD should so
particularly distinguish him from the other
Disciples; as to admit him as a companion
in his most secret retirements, as an evidence
and

and spectator of his most private miracles, and that nothing may be wanting fully to evince the great love of his Saviour and Redeemer, to give him a lively foretaste of his future Glory, as well as a particular assurance of his Divine extract, at his glorious Transfiguration. These were favors of so peculiar a nature, and besides afforded such powerful convictions of our Lord's Divinity, as must, one would have imagined, not only have very much endeared his Person to those to whom they were vouchsafed, but likewise have confirmed them in the belief of his Doctrines, and the true end and design of his coming into the World. But it is pretty remarkable, that Miracles (which ever were, and always will be looked upon as one due attestation of a Divine Mission) did not operate so forcibly upon the mind of *Peter* as they ought to have done. For the very night before he betrayed this irresolution on the water, he had, to his great amazement, seen the hunger of five thousand men, besides women and children, satisfied at the expence only of five loaves, and two fishes. And what very much heightened the Miracle, was the supernatural

rat increase of that which remained over and above to them that had eaten, " They
" took up of the fragments that remained
" twelve baskets full.

A Miracle, so fully and duly attested as this appears to have been, should have left a deeper and more lasting impression on the minds of those for whom it was wrought, than it appears to have done, according to the account of another Evangelist, who introduces the great Discerner of hearts, reproving them in the following manner :
" Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me
" not because ye saw the Miracles, but be-
" cause ye did eat of the loaves and were
" filled." To which he immediately sub-
" joins this advice, " Labour not for the meat
" that perisheth, but for that meat which
" endureth unto everlasting life, which the
" Son of Man shall give unto you."

But what can be offered in excuse for Pe-
ter, who was not only an evidence of the
miracle itself, but was honoured likewise in
being an instrument in the performance of
it? " Jesus blessed and brake, and gave to
" his

"his Disciples, and the Disciples to the multitude." An honor so great, considering the miraculous efficacy of the distribution, as might have elevated him, especially in the presence of his Master, above the sense of impending dangers, made him easy and undisturbed as to the issues of this life, and perfectly resigned to all the ways of Providence. But such is the frailty of human nature, that the reflection of what should support us in our dangers and difficulties is generally lost in the solicitude of the event of them, and so our apprehensions come to get the better of our reason and understanding. This was the case of *Peter*. He was under so strong a conviction of the Miracle wrought upon the five thousand the evening before; and so transported at the sight of our blessed Lord's walking upon the water, that he thought he could not sufficiently shew his zeal without desiring him, that he would bid, or command him to come unto him on the water. Our blessed Lord consents to his request. And what was the consequence? Why, he was no sooner disembarked but the boisterous wind terrified him, and beginning to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me."

Behold

Behold the courage and confidence of this most zealous Apostle; he commits himself to the rage and power of the waves under a full assurance of our blessed Saviour's ability to preserve him, the stormy winds in a great measure foil his attempt, and render his passage to Jesus difficult and dangerous; still at length, though within the reach of Omnipotence, beginning to sink, he cries, "LORD, save me." What an amazing instance of timidity in the execution of a commission of his LORD and Master? Because he could not as lightly skim the surface of the waters, as the Divinity itself, he began to suspect the rashness of his enterprise, and in the midst of his danger, with a strange mixture of great fear and diffidence, to implore the immediate assistance of him by whose direction he had made this hazardous attempt.

As if *He*, who had satisfied the hunger of five thousand the evening before, was now incapable of assisting his Disciple in distress, or divested of the power of saving him from perishing in the waters; as if *He*, who had given "fight to the Blind, and made the

"Lame to walk, and the Dumb to speak,
 "and even raised the Dead," was now unable to exert his Omnipotence to extricate his favorite Disciple from the boisterousness and fury of the waves.

But the truth was, the sense of our Saviour's Miracles was quite buried under the apprehension of his present danger; his Cowardice, or Diffidence rather, was such, that it got the mastery over his Faith and Resolution; and what should have been his main support, now forsook him in this time of extremity. But this is not the only instance of *Peter's* weakness and irresolution. There is such a criminal account of his behavior in all the Evangelists, just after our Saviour's apprehension, as must fill the heart of every sincere Christian with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. And though he was apprised of this terrible event the evening before, that "the Shepherd was to be smitten, and the sheep of the flock to be scattered abroad," yet such was his seeming fearlessness and zeal for his Lord and Master, that he declared, "though all men should be offended because of him, yet
 . . . would

" would he never be offended ; and that he
 " was ready and willing to go with him
 " both to prison and to death." How
 punctually he executed these heroic resolu-
 tions, we are by the same Evangelist like-
 wise informed.

As to his behavior at the time of our
 LORD's apprehension, (setting aside his in-
 discreet zeal in the use of the sword) it was
 exactly the same with the other Disciples,
 " for they *all*, without exception, forsook
 " him and fled." Indeed we are told by St
Mark that *Peter* soon returned, and " fol-
 " lowed him at some distance to the Palace
 " of the High-Priest, to observe the end." And this curiosity proved the very cause of
 the denial of his Lord and Master, and at
 the same time very flagrantly exposed the
 sincerity of his resolution of " going with
 " him to prison and to death." For though
 he had the laudable intrepidity to follow
 him, and mix among those who apprehend-
 ed him, yet he had not the courage and for-
 titude to own him, upon a bare challenge,
 that he *was* his Disciple. So far from it,
 that he did not scruple to attest his inno-

cence by pleading an utter unacquaintance with, and ignorance of his person. And though he was confronted by a second evidence, that was in the garden of *Gethsemane*, and saw him with our Saviour at the time of his apprehension, yet such was his cowardice, that he actually averred he was so far from being a *Disciple*, that he was quite at a loss to understand of *whom* he spake. He was challenged a third time upon the single circumstance of his country; "surely" thou art *one* of them, for thou art a *Galilean*, and thy speech agreeth thereto." But all to no purpose; nothing could extort from him a confession that he had been with Jesus. Thus he persevered in an obstinate denial of his Lord and Master, till the crowing of the Cock, and a Look from our blessed Saviour, put him upon a recollection of what he had been doing, made him truly sensible of his past guilt, and obliged him to make the best Atonement and Expiation he was able, by a sincere Repentance and Humiliation: "he went out" and wept bitterly."

What I would infer from this short account

count of the conduct and character of *Peter* is, that we should not confide too much in our own strength and abilities; without considering at the same time the frailties and imperfections of our nature. That we should be cautious in engaging in any enterprise, before we have considered whether we are duly qualified to conduct it to an happy execution. That our zeal should never betray us into rash vows or promises, which are either beyond our ability to perform, or not in the least warranted by Scripture. That we should always be diligent and circumspect in our Duty; ever ready to oppose any attempts that shall be made upon us by the Enemy of our salvation, as well as willing to execute what is commanded by our Lord and Master. In a word, to be careful not to suffer our zeal to get the better of our understanding, but so to moderate our passions, as to make them subservient to the great ends of Religion, the Glory of God, and the Happiness of Men. These are the lessons I would now inculcate from the words before us. And because they afford us a short history of the weakness and frailty of a favorite Disciple, occa-

fioned by a heated and misguided zeal, I shall, for our better information, in the sequel of this Discourse,

Consider, in the *first* place, in as circumstantial a manner as I am able, the nature of the petition in the Text, "LORD, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

Secondly, I shall endeavor to shew how and wherein *Peter* came to err in the execution of it; "when he saw the winds boisterous he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, LORD, save me." And then,

Thirdly, I shall draw an Inference or two from what shall be said, and so conclude.

First then I am to consider the nature of the petition in the Text.

And here it may be requisite to take notice, that how odd and extravagant soever this request may at first sight seem in the mouth of *Peter*, considering the hurry, and precipitate manner in which it was expressed,

it

it will yet be difficult to charge it with want of address, or that necessary precaution which should always attend petitions of this nature. The Person he applies himself to, who was no less than "God manifest in the flesh," he addresses by a title suitable and peculiar to his dignity. In the next place, he does not venture to embark in this enterprise before he was assured that it was CHRIST himself, and had obtained his special consent and approbation. "LORD, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water. And he said, Come." It is very possible that other persons who had been favored by our blessed LORD in so particular a manner as *Peter* was, might have run into greater excesses, and not have been so deliberate and circumspect in their addresses as he appears to have been in this. To reflect only on the lowness of life, and the meanness of occupation from which he was raised, to be a Disciple and Companion of the great God of Heaven and Earth, might have elevated some, less humble than himself, to have conceived so highly of their own excellencies, that it was hardly possible for them to err or do amiss. For it is very observa-

ble in common life, that where any person is admitted to a more than usual confidence with a Superior, he is not only apt to conceive more highly of himself than he ought, but to domineer and tyrannise over his equals, and in time likewise to lessen his respect towards him who was the sole cause of his elevation. This is what we see too frequently verified in practice to need a proof. This therefore is a charge by no means to be imputed to *Peter*. He does not appear to shew any manner of want of respect to our blessed LORD in this petition; so far from it, that his forward zeal prompts him to be the first and foremost in putting it in execution. And really considering the particular intimacy there was between our blessed LORD and *Peter*, and how lately he had been favoured with the sight of a Miracle; there is nothing either unnatural or surprising in this behavior. Common gratitude obliges those who have received extraordinary and unexpected favors to be careful to make suitable returns. And we find that *Peter* was so sensible of this, that his zeal spurred him on, by our LORD's permission, to shew this respect by meeting him on the water.

So

So that I think there can be nothing criminal laid to his charge with regard to the request itself. Nay, our blessed LORD's approbation of it puts that beyond all dispute.

But here it may be objected, to what purpose was this mighty shew of zeal? And what reason had *he*, above the other Disciples, to engage in so hazardous an enterprise? Would he have been deemed the least culpable if he had tarried on board with the rest of his companions till our Saviour came up with them? Would not the circumstance of his confinement, and the nature of the element on which he then was, have been very reasonable excuses for his continuance in the vessel in which (considering the contrariety of winds and the tumultuous sea) they must repose their utmost safety and security?

But to all these objections it will not be very difficult to reply. As to the extraordinary zeal of *Peter*, so far beyond that of the other Disciples, there is nothing in the least wonderful or surprising in it. Amongst men there is as great a difference of tempers
and

and constitutions, as there is variety of features and complexions. Persons of cool and deliberate minds are scarce ever known to discover any visible eagerness, let the advantage in view be ever so considerable. Their knowledge and experience of events fills them with apprehensions that their schemes, however well concerted, may be frustrated or attended with bad consequences, and so all their hopes of success end in disappointment. And if this is the case, where there is no reasonable ground for fear or solicitude, it can scarce be thought that such men could ever be brought to embark in a design attended with any visible marks of difficulty and danger. This might be the reason why *Peter's* companions, who had been toiling all the night in a boisterous sea, and were but too apprehensive of their danger, did not discover any particular joy at the sight of our Saviour; however, they were very far from exerting their zeal as he did, by offering to meet him on the water. So far from it, that their own suggestions added to the fear of the tempest, for, instead of a Savior, they fancied they saw a Spirit, to whom very probably they might readily

readily impute their past and present distress. For as it is very natural for people in jeopardy to use their utmost caution and vigilance in order to their own safety and preservation, so it is as natural for them to be discouraged, nay terrified and affrighted, upon the sight of any thing unusual and extraordinary. However, to men in these circumstances there always will be a remarkable difference with regard to their courage and resolution. This is particularly observed in the behavior of *Peter*; the toil of the night, and the danger of the tempest, was quite lost in the transport of joy he was in upon the sight of our Saviour; and so great was his zeal, that nothing would serve but he must go and meet him on the water; whilst his other companions had scarce recovered themselves from their fear and consternation.

This objection, therefore, with regard to *Peter's* not observing the same prudential conduct with the other Disciples, if we reflect only on the different tempers and complexions of men, the variety of passions by which their behavior and actions are influenced,

enced, entirely falls to the ground, and loses all its force and efficacy. There is not a more familiar instance in life, than the truth of the argument I am now upon. Take any three persons who have been most providentially preserved from impending ruin, by the seasonable assistance of some unexpected friend, and observe only whether they express the *same* Gratitude, Love and Respect for their Deliverer. Behold others in the utmost distress ready to perish for want, and remark only when their hunger has been abated by some compassionate hand, whether their hearts have been *alike* inspired with the grateful memory of their Benefactor. There is, God be praised, a true sense of Gratitude in some, together with a commendable and virtuous zeal for exerting themselves in the protection and defence of Those who have kindly relieved and assisted them. Their prayers for their welfare and prosperity in this life, together with their fervent intreaties that their alms may ascend up as a memorial before God, is a tribute due to their memories, and commanded by their Beneficence.

But

But it is a sad truth, that where Virtue exerts itself in one such instance, Ingratitude shews itself in ten. But give me leave to observe, that this is a crime of so deep a dye, that our blessed LORD seemed quite astonished at the commission of it; how persons who had received the most signal Mercies could yet be wanting in Gratitude for, or even so much as a bare acknowledgment of them. He could not help expressing his amazement, to think that but one of the Lepers, out of the *ten* which he had cleansed, and he a *Samaritan* too, should alone be affected with so lively a sense of the Miracle wrought on him, as immediately "to give God the Glory, and to return back " and throw himself at the feet of Jesus, " giving him thanks." The grateful and commendable behavior of this single person reminded our LORD of the Brutality and Ingratitude of the rest; " were there not " *ten* cleansed, says he, but where are the " *nine*?" And then, in an Ejaculation wherein he expresses the utmost astonishment, " There are not returned to give Glory to " God, save this stranger." So that we see, even in circumstances of common life, where

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one would scarce think it possible there should be the least disagreement of tempers and affections in men, an extreme contrariety of behavior, arising from their different passions and prejudices. Some, who always retain the sense of a Benefit, and are ready not only to express their gratitude to their Benefactor, but assiduous and diligent to return it. Others, who receive a good office, as due only to their circumstance or merit, neither thankful to the doer of it, nor in the least solicitous to return it.

It were needless to pursue this argument any farther, since our own experience must convince us that in most schemes, however well intended for the public good, where there are numbers concerned in the execution of them, there will always be, either through Interest, Prejudice or Perverseness, or for the sake of Opposition, variety of judgments and opinions; which are the natural parents of a contrariety of conduct and behavior; or, in other words, of disorder and confusion. So long therefore as this difference of judgment and affection subsists among men, so long we must expect

pect a great variety of conduct and behavior among them. So that *Peter's* superior zeal above that of the rest of his companions, should be so far from surprising us, that if we consider the warmth of his natural temper and disposition, the sudden starts and sallies of passion to which it was subject, and the great affection he expressed for our Saviour, it would have been matter rather of surprise if his behavior had been otherwise than it was. Besides, however weak and indiscreet he shewed himself in this particular, in others he does not stand charged with any thing that may in the least discredit his character or profession. Our blessed Redeemer's Person and Converse was his chief pleasure and delight; a small absence from him, had increased his desire of seeing him, and the so much unlooked for and unexpected sight of him upon the water, raised in *Peter* such an eagerness of shewing his zeal and respect to him, that he could not help intreating our blessed Lord that he might meet him on that fluctuating element.

Thus much therefore may suffice for the petition

petition itself. I shall now proceed, in the *second* place, To shew how and wherein *Peter* came to err in the execution of it. " And " when he saw the wind boisterous, he was " afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, " LORD, save me."

This indeed I have in a great measure anticipated in the preface to this Discourse. However, as it will be of singular service to every one of us to be acquainted with our own strength, and how far our courage and resolution may be able to support us in the day of Adversity: I hope it will not be deemed impertinent or unseasonable, if I should endeavor to describe what a true zeal is. For without our knowledge of, or acquaintance with *this*, we shall never be able to form a true judgment of our own actions, or whether we behave consistently with the just marks and characters of it.

Now a true religious zeal, which must always be grounded upon a sincere Faith, consists in a fervent desire of pleasing God, and promoting his Glory, by a stedfast obedience to what he has commanded, and an hearty

heartly opposition to what he has forbid. And this definition comprises in it the whole of a Christian's Duty. How so plain a direction to our comfort in this life, and happiness in the next, comes to be so overlooked or mistaken by the generality of mankind, can be attributed to no other cause but their own corrupt Passions and Inclinations. These are apt to operate so forcibly upon their minds, that they cannot bear being prescribed to, either as to the measure of their Duty, or the rule of their Actions; and thus it is that Virtue and Religion come to be so much neglected, and men so conceited of their own abilities, as to do "that only" which is right in their own eyes."

But this sure could not be the case of the Apostle with whom we have to do in the Text. If Prejudices are allowed to have any effect upon our minds, or to influence our behavior; the converse of so extraordinary a person as our blessed LORD, the frequent sight of Miracles done by him, together with the delegation of the same power to others, whereby he himself was enabled to work them, must leave such strong and

lasting impressions on the memory, as no time, no circumstance of life can be able to erase.

Had our blessed LORD indeed confined his power of working Miracles to himself, this would only have been one external evidence of his Divine Mission; but when he communicated this power to others, and made it equally as effectual, there could be no room in the world to doubt of his being (as it is most elegantly expressed in Scripture) "the Brightness of God's Glory; and the express Image of his Person;" or, in other words, the Source and Fountain of all Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. So that so full and clear a testimony of our LORD's Divinity must serve very much to confirm the Faith of *Peter*, and consequently prove a very great aggravation of his fear and distrust; and that too at a time when he was in the presence, nay within the reach of his Divine Master.

It could not be upon this account therefore that he betrayed this criminal want of courage and resolution on the water. But there

there was a reigning prejudice which he, as well as the whole Nation of the Jews had long entertained, that when the Messiah came, he was to be an universal Conqueror, a mighty King. Upon this persuasion *Peter*, as a favorite Companion and Disciple of the Messiah, might flatter himself with the expectation of being raised to some eminent degree of temporal Greatness. And the hope of this elevation might induce him to exert himself in those superior instances of zeal to the other Disciples. As to our Redeemer's external appearance being no way answerable to such an expectation, if he was under any disappointment as to that particular circumstance, yet that might be easily reconciled by the extraordinary Power wherewith he was vested. Though he did not appear in a splendid manner, or erect his Banners with offers of temporal Rewards, yet he came with much stronger evidences of a Divine Mission, of a Divine Authority. This misconception therefore with regard to our Lord's appearance was abundantly made up by the supernatural plenitude of his Power. His Miracles were designed to raise the general attention of

mankind; and, in the opinion of *Peter*, to gain their admiration and esteem so far, that when he should think fit to declare himself their Saviour and Deliverer, they would all be very ready to enrol themselves as Subjects, and submit to his dominion. This appears to have been *Peter's* firm opinion of our blessed LORD's Mission and Authority. And though he had been severely reprimanded by him for entertaining such notions, yet he could not believe otherwise, even after our blessed LORD was apprehended; or his curiosity would never have carried him so far as "to the High Priest's palace to see the end."

From this vain and mistaken conception we may justly attribute not only that particular instance of diffidence in the Text, but all the criminal part of this Apostle's behavior. For when men come to entertain any immoderate opinion of the advantage of this life, and make them the chief objects of their pursuit, it is impossible that the true life or fervor of Religion should exert itself; there being such a direct contrariety between the objects of the one, and the interests

terests of the other. Had this Apostle been duly attentive to that part of our Saviour's Doctrine which recommended Humility, Contempt of the World, and the like, as the most proper qualifications for his followers, the thoughts of temporal Grandeur would not have disturbed him, especially at a time when he was executing a commission of his Lord and Master. The pleasing consciousness that what he was then doing was in obedience to a command of his Saviour, would have vanquished the terrors of the deep, and assured him, though in the most imminent danger, of a safe and speedy deliverance. So that to whatever cause we impute the motive of his singular zeal, yet, I think, we may justly attribute all the fear and cowardice subsequent to it, to the false notions he had conceived of the character and office of the Messiah.

I shall therefore now proceed, in the *third* and *last* place, To draw an Inference or two from what has been said, and so conclude.

And *first* then, we may learn from the behavior of this Apostle, never to engage in any enterprise, when we are conscious

that we are not qualified to accomplish it. There is scarce any one that is so unacquainted with himself, as not to be a pretty good judge of his own abilities. He knows how far the strength and agility of his Body will carry him; and likewise how much he may depend upon the vigor and integrity of his Understanding. This intimacy, therefore, as it furnishes a man with a due and proper intelligence of himself with regard to his outward conduct, so it must render him mean and despicable whenever he transcends the limits of it, by attempting what he has not power to perform. This is an observation too frequently to be met with in secular life. But it is of a more fatal consequence when it happens to attempt impossibilities in religious concerns. For there a mind thus principled (as, God knows, for want of a better information in Virtue and Religion, there are too many in the world) is too apt to adhere to its own sentiments, and depend too much upon its own directions. Hence the Severities of Religion are easily dispensed with by such persons, and Faith, the true ground of our perseverance in the Duties of Christianity, entirely rejected.

rejected. Hence divine Authority is set at nought, and human Fallibility, the natural effect of corrupt and reprobate minds, is set up in its stead. Hence it is, that men become warm and vehement in the defence of their errors, and choose, rather than admit the least confutation, to run into the greatest absurdities.

Secondly, From what has been said we may learn likewise never to suffer the affairs of this world to come in competition with those of our Religion. A man who professes a sincere zeal and love for his Maker, will always be careful in his religious addresses, "to worship him in Spirit and Truth." To this good end he earnestly labors to devote all his thoughts, and all his actions. In public life,—a strict observer of justice and equity; in trade—true and just in all his dealings; in his conversation,—amiable and exemplary; in his family,—affectionate, discreet, and temperate; grateful and generous to the well-deserving, and a sincere Patron and Friend to the Poor and Indigent. With such a noble stock of Piety, with so many heavenly Accomplishments, he

is more than proof against all the assaults of men, or the craft and malice of the Devil. He can bid defiance to the most terrifying menaces, or the most inviting temptations of the one, and with the utmost intrepidity tread the other under his feet.

But this, perhaps it may be said, is a Description, an Instance of Virtue, very rarely to be met with; and so may be looked upon as designed only to excite our imitation. But it is so necessary, so indispensable an example, that unless we use our utmost endeavors to copy after it, we shall be found miserably deficient both in our Duty to God, as well as in that we owe to our Neighbor.

• In order therefore to wean ourselves from an immoderate esteem or love of the world, we should do well at all times to consider the shortness of this life, and the nature of its enjoyments; the great end of our continuance in this state of Probation, and the exquisite happiness or misery that will await our good or bad behavior in another world. And these reflections, if duly attended to, will greatly influence our conduct, and promote

mote our Virtue ; fill us with a contempt of the good things of this life ; and inspire us with a laudable zeal to run the race that is set before us. And may the Grace of God so enlighten our minds as to make us always so truly sensible of our Duty, as that in the most dangerous and severe trials, " in all " time of our Tribulation, in all time of " our Wealth, nay, in the hour of Death," we may be able to exhibit the clearest testimony of our Faith and Integrity, and in the Day of Judgment meet with that approbation and reward, which God of his infinite mercy hath promised to bestow on all those who have " fought a good fight, finished " their course well, and kept the Faith."

Now to God the Father, &c.



SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

GALATIANS V. 1.

*Stand fast therefore in the Liberty
wherewith CHRIST hath made us
free.*

It is pretty remarkable, that no-
thing redounds more to the Credit
and Reputation of *St Paul*, than his
great Zeal and Integrity, both un-
der the Jewish and Christian dispensations. In
the former of which he appears to have been
so strenuous an asserter of the Customs and
Traditions of the Fathers, that he thought
himself obliged to persecute and imprison
those of a different persuasion; and does not
scruple to own to *King Agrippa*, that before
his conversion to the Christian Faith, (such
was his zealous adherence to the Law) when
the Christians were put to Death, he also
gave

gave his voice against them. Indeed how far he could justify this zeal, either from the express letter of the Law, or any particular Tradition, may be matter of debate. But this we know, he was of a Sect amongst the Jews the most strict, as well as reputable; and he might think it incumbent on him, as he was educated according to the perfect manner of the Law of the Fathers, not only to live up to the rules and dictates of it, but to distress and persecute those who opposed it. However, this we may be sure of, that for whatever he did of this nature, admit he had no other authority, he had the particular direction of his Conscience. "I verily thought with myself, says he to Agrippa, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Amongst which are those we have been just speaking of.

As to his behavior after his miraculous conversion to the Christian Religion; we shall find it every way agreeable to the genius of it. And though it was not his happiness to be so early a convert as the other Apostles, though he was neither a Partner in our
blessed

blessed LORD's Conversation, nor an Evi-
 dence of his Miracles, yet we find in the
 propagating the Christian Faith, that " he
 " laboured more abundantly than they all.
 This not only his own enumeration of his
 dangers and sufferings, the truth of which
 we may safely depend on, but divers other
 testimonies do fully evince. Witness only
 the pains he was at, and the dangers to
 which he was exposed in the work of his
 Ministry. Witness the many Churches he
 planted, and the great care he takes in most
 of his Epistles, to preserve them in the pure
 and undefiled Religion. How solicitous he
 shews himself upon any religious contro-
 versy between the Jewish and Gentile Con-
 verts, to compose the difference, and reunite
 them. In a word, how pleased with the
 success of his labours; what an enemy to
 heterodoxy, and what an Orator and De-
 fender of the Christian Faith, all his writ-
 ings, and his life and sufferings do fully
 testify.

The passage of Scripture we have now
 before us, is a pressing exhortation to the
 Church at *Galatia* to persevere " in the li-
 berty

" liberty, wherewith CHRIST had made them
 " free." St Paul had reprimanded them,
 in the former part of this Epistle, for hav-
 ing been seduced by some of the Gnostic Sect
 to admit of circumcision, and to suffer them-
 selves to be again entangled with that yoke
 of bondage. He assures them, so great was
 his confidence in his sacred calling and com-
 mission, that whatever Innovations these Ju-
 daizing Teachers endeavored to introduce
 or superadd to the Gospel of CHRIST, nei-
 ther they, nor he, nor any of the Apostles,
 nor even " an Angel from Heaven, could
 " preach any other Gospel " without incur-
 ring the sentence of excommunication. That
 for his own part, though he was a Jew by
 nation, and brought up under the Law,
 yet all his prejudices in favor of that dis-
 pensation must submit to the gracious Re-
 velation of JESUS CHRIST. And accordingly
 we find him throughout the whole course of
 his Apostleship, severely animadverting up-
 on those who would seduce the Christian Be-
 lievers, and cautioning his disciples against
 their errors and heresies. That there could
 be no efficacy in the belief of the Gospel,
 which was intended to supersede and abolish
 the

the ritual Ordinances of the Law, if it could not be depended on without circumcisions. That in CHRIST neither the external profession of one or the other did avail any thing, but a new Creature. That the first of these indeed was of divine appointment, and to continue till the Death of CHRIST; but afterwards to cease and to be done away. That the intention of CHRIST's sufferings would be entirely frustrated, if that weight of Observances which he came to remove were still continued. And every one who submitted to have the seal of the Covenant, did so far disqualify himself from being a partaker of the glorious privileges of the Gospel; that he "was a debtor to do the whole Law." That he was under the same unprofitable servility with the unbelieving Jews, and that CHRIST stood him in no stead.

And if this was the case, how could the Apostle have given a better proof of his office, and of his great affection towards those to whom this Epistle is directed, than by representing to them the great difference there was between the Legal and Gospel dispensations?

dispensations? For this he appeals to their own judgment and experience, since their conversion to the Christian Religion; whether they ever received those kindly influences of the Spirit, by which they were now assisted under all their Trials and Sufferings, by the works of the Law: that is, whether the strictest and most zealous observer of it was, by virtue of any express promise contained in the Law, intitled to this divine fellowship? Without doubt he was not; for this was to be one of the great privileges of the Gospel, and the happy consequence of CHRIST's sufferings. And therefore it could not but be matter of surprise to *St. Paul*, that they who had tasted the word of God, and had begun in the Spirit, should now seek to be made perfect by the flesh. "Are you so foolish, says he, "having begun in the Spirit, are ye now "made perfect by the flesh?" that is, by having recourse to the external Rites and Ceremonies of the Law of *Moses*. Then having made use of the most persuasive arguments to convince them of the great difference there was between their former and present situation, he earnestly exhorts them

to

to "stand fast in the Liberty wherewith
 "CHRIST had made them free, and not to
 "be intangled again with the yoke of
 "bondage."

In speaking to these words I shall endeavour,

First, To explain what this Liberty spoken of in the Text is : and after having done this, I shall of course, in the

Second place, Be led to consider how and by whom it was obtained. Which will furnish us, in the *last* place, with some motives for our perseverance in it. "Stand fast, therefore, in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST has made you free."

I am, *first*, to explain what this Liberty, in the Text is.

It will be very obvious to every person who casts an eye on the latter part of the verse in the Text, that the Liberty here spoken of can mean only the sincere Profession of the Gospel of CHRIST, in opposition to the works of the Law ; which, in the Text, and many other places in the new

Testament, is represented by terms which convey to us the plainest intimations of its insufficiency to the purposes of true Holiness, as well as of the great burden it imposed on every professor of it; and which St *Peter*, who had felt the weight of it himself, and so was able to judge truly with relation to former times, says, "neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear." Concerning which yoke of bondage St *Paul* likewise is to be understood, when he rejoices that "we are now delivered from the Law," *Rom. vii. 6.* And it is very observable, that in the beginning of the Chapter before the Text, he compares those who were under these legal obligations to Servants, or Children yet under age, "that were under Tutors and Governors until the time appointed by the Father." Whilst he exhorts others, who had embraced the Gospel, and so were discharged from the obligation of the Law, "to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be intangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Again, this Liberty we enjoy under the Christian

Christian dispensation is farther evident by that freedom from the fear and terror which under the Law, could not but make men all their life-time subject to bondage; at least till they could be assured of pardon for such things from which they could not be justified by the Law of *Moses*. This is the reason why *St James* styles the Gospel "the perfect Law of Liberty." Because those who are so happy as to profess it, are not only made acquainted with the terms and conditions of it, but with the person and circumstances of their Redeemer, and the manner and reasons of their Redemption. Nay, so greatly superior are the privileges and advantages of the new Covenant, to those of the Jewish Dispensation, that if any Christian should through the violence of temptation stifle the motions of the Spirit of Grace, there is under this merciful dispensation, the gracious mean of a recovery left, he hath an Advocate with the Father, *JESUS CHRIST* the righteous; and he is assured, upon his sincere Repentance and Reformation, that he will be a Propitiation for his sins.

Indeed there was this remedy in the old Law, but it lay concealed under such a veil of darkness and obscurity, that few, excepting those of a very lively Faith and Piety, were then influenced by it. Nay, we are assured, that to this time, though it hath since appeared to mankind in general in so glaring and conspicuous a light, it still remains to the Jews under the same darkness and obscurity. So that the want of this assurance must prove a real discouragement to those who lived under a Dispensation which enjoined a perfect obedience to its Precepts; and which the strictest observers among them were not able to perform; and which, at the same time, was no otherwise to be atoned for than by their lively Faith in the promised Redemption.

But it is our happiness to live in an age, and under a dispensation, which is not overshadowed with that darkness and ignorance which accompanied the professors of the old Law. We are left to no conjectures or uncertainties as to future Rewards and Punishments. The Law we are to be judged by, is so plain and easy to be understood, and

its rules and precepts so agreeable to our nature, that the transgressors of them must necessarily anticipate the divine Justice, and be condemned by their own consciences. The ungrateful refusal of men to comply with terms so very beneficial to them, cannot arise from any doubts and scruples concerning their sense and meaning, but from a corrupt heart. So that when some men plead either the obscurity or difficulty of conforming to some precepts of the Gospel, it is not because in reality either the one or the other of these attends them; but it is done in order to palliate or extenuate the guilt of such practices as these precepts do expressly prohibit. Thus all those necessary injunctions of loving our Enemies, forgiveness of Injuries, of returning Good for Evil, of Mortification and Self-denial, are represented by these Libertines as so many cramps and incroachments upon the freedom of our Nature, purely because it is not consistent with their particular vicious humors to conform to them. It is not because they are repugnant to the dictates of sober Reason that they are rejected, but because they are inconsistent with and contradictory

dictory to the corrupt principles which they
 avow. Neither is it because they infringe
 upon any one's private peace, or the gene-
 ral tranquillity, but because they convey se-
 vere reprimands to those who are enemies
 to both. In a word, there is not any pre-
 cept in the Gospel that is recommended to
 our imitation, that is either inconsistent
 with our interest, or a restraint upon our
 Liberty; but a certain promoter of, and se-
 curity to both. So that all who conform
 to this perfect Law of Liberty, must of
 course enjoy the highest privileges and free-
 dom of their nature; and all who oppose
 it must be necessarily instruments of their
 own misery and bondage.

And therefore, since it is apparent that
 the Gospel Institution is not clogged with
 any unnecessary observances, and that every
 thing contained therein is agreeable to our
 Reason, and attended with a just recompence
 of reward, men must be wilfully blind not
 to discern the great difference between the
 present and former dispensation; as well as
 extremely imprudent, after they have been
 admitted into this glorious freedom, not to
 stand

stand fast in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made them free," but to suffer themselves to be again intangled with the yoke of bondage.

It were very easy to produce many other instances to shew how vastly superior the terms of the Gospel Covenant are to those of the Legal dispensation; how consistent they are with the Reason and Nature of man; and with what propriety the Apostle speaks of them as the means of our spiritual Liberty and Freedom. But this being a thing we are most of us so well acquainted with, it will be needless to use other arguments to confirm it. I shall therefore only mention some motives for our standing fast, and persevering in this "Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free."

I shall now go on to the *Third* and last particular, to mention some motives to encourage our perseverance in this "Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free."

The *first* that offers itself to our consideration, is the Person by whom this Liberty

was procured. It is but common Gratitude to acknowledge, at least, past favours, and, if our circumstances will admit of it, to return them. This our blessed Saviour affirms us was so generally observed, even amongst the Heathens, that they stood in need of no particular direction to enforce it. And we by their behavior, to which he appeals where he is recommending universal Love to his Disciples, that they had the highest sense of mutual obligations; and that they always took care to proportion them accordingly. Indeed it is not in our power to make a just retaliation for the favor of our restored Liberty; we cannot, if we should suffer as CHRIST did, produce the same happy effect by it. But since he has been pleased to dispense with this severity, and in lieu thereof to accept only a submission and obedience to his laws, we shall be guilty of the highest Ingratitude to refuse it. A crime that will be attended with all the most aggravating circumstances that can possibly ensue. The Dignity, Innocence and Love of the Redeemer, the Unworthiness, Corruption, and Wickedness of the Redeemed; His excellent Directions and admirable Example;

ample;—our Contempt of the one and Neglect of the other;—his private Admonitions and secret Calls to Repentance; our inexorable, hard, and impenitent Hearts;—How will all these circumstances aggravate our guilt, how justly shall we come forth to the Resurrection of Condemnation, if we thus abuse the greatest blessing that infinite Love was capable of bestowing, or our own nature of receiving? Can there be any room to hope for pardon after such perverseness; or can we expect forgiveness for such Ingratitude? Can we rely upon the mercy and intercession of Him, who hath before reprieved us at the price of his own life, in order to make us capable of a blessed Immortality? Or can we imagine that the solemnity of the last tribunal will be unattended with any of the punishments mentioned in the Gospel? As there is not the least ground or reason for such a supposal, it should be our particular care, that neither our own passions, and inclinations, nor the craft and malice of the Devil, seduce us to have recourse to such poor dependencies. Our situation is such, that nothing can hurt us without our own consent and approbation;

tion, and our Liberty and Freedom so well grounded and secured, as to be able to repel the strongest attacks of the most formidable enemy. So that there will be nothing wanting on our side, but a careful vigilance to detect, a resolution to oppose, and a fortitude to repel, and a proper success will follow of course. And when we have completed one conquest, we shall be animated and encouraged to pursue another. Thus we shall not only "stand fast and persevere" in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath "made us free;" we shall not only approve ourselves CHRIST's Soldiers and Servants in this life, but for our reward, when we go hence, we shall be admitted into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.

Another motive or encouragement for our standing fast and persevering in this Liberty, should be the nature of the thing itself. It was the peculiar privilege of man, above any other creature, to have certain faculties allotted him by infinite Wisdom, which might serve as a guide and influence to him throughout the whole intercourse of life. And as by these he was qualified, without any foreign

reign

reign aid or assistance, to put in execution what was conducive to his happiness, so he was enabled to shun what might terminate in misery. By the light of Reason and necessary Experience, he was capable of distinguishing the various events which attended the proper exercise or abuse of them. So that if through the violence of his Passions, or the fraud and cunning of the Tempter, he should be ever induced to make his understanding a Slave to his will, he must be sensible, though it destroy not the Liberty and Freedom of acting, yet it in a great measure frustrates the end and design of his Reason. For as that was given us to arm us against Temptation, and to preserve that subjection which is so necessary to the support of its rule and government, so it will be impossible to promote our present, or secure our future happiness, without such a regimen and subjection. It is true indeed, we may be said to enjoy the freedom of our Nature after we are fallen from Grace, and become slaves to our Passions, but this is such a freedom as will only serve to enhance our misery. The gracious design of God's conferring this Liberty on man was, that he might

might render his Maker a reasonable service, that he might be induced by the assistance of that light within him, to add some dignity to his behavior, by choosing the Good, and refusing the Evil; and some worth to his actions, by not being so easily overcome of Evil, but to overcome Evil with Good. This is the nature of that Liberty we are exhorted to stand fast and persevere in. A Liberty that lays no restraint upon us, but what is consistent with our present and future Interest. A Liberty, as it does not impair or invalidate the great ends of Religion, so it doth by no means encourage, or run into Licentiousness. A Liberty, as it fails not to acquaint us with our own unworthiness, so it inspires us with reverend and exalted thoughts of the Almighty. In a word, a Liberty, that as it confers a true composure and quietness of mind in this life, so it will secure to us the joys of a blessed Immortality in the next.

Another motive, that should engage us to stand fast in this Liberty, is the great price by which it was procured. It is very natural to proportion our regard and value for things

things according to their intrinsic worth and excellence; and if so, it will necessarily follow, that we cannot entertain too high an esteem for the favor of our restored Liberty. Let us suppose any one who has had the misfortune to be acquainted with the severities that are generally practised in the gloomy scenes of slavery and captivity;—must he not be abandoned to all sense of gratitude, not to express the highest thankfulness for a deliverance from so wretched and miserable a condition? Nay, even admit that Severities or corporal Punishments should not be the fate of the enslaved, yet such is the natural desire of freedom implanted in every one of us, that a bare confinement would be such a restraint upon a virtuous mind, that life would be scarce tolerable under this burden.

If therefore a deliverance from temporal captivity is apt to have such a grateful influence upon the mind, to what a height of Gratitude should the reflection of our being delivered from our spiritual enemies raise us? A deliverance, which was absolutely out of our own power, or the interest

rest or solicitation of our best friends ever to procure. A deliverance to which we had no right or title, because we were the immediate causes of our own thralldom. A deliverance we could not foresee, because we were, at least in that particular, in a state of utter ignorance and obscurity. A deliverance we could not hope for or expect, because we had done nothing to deserve it; and if to all these circumstances we should add the condition by which it was obtained, it cannot but fill our minds with the highest Gratitude and Admiration.

By such reflections as these we shall often renew our resolutions of treading in our Redeemer's steps, and copying after his example;—by these we shall admire his condescension in assuming our nature; and, if we are capable of being touched with a sense of others sufferings, sympathize with his. By these likewise, we shall be acquainted with our condition before the price was paid for our Redemption; and by a comparison of our present with our former situation, we must be moved to bless the

cause

cause of this happy change, conform our lives to the designs of our Redeemer, to stand fast, and be upon our guard against any attacks that shall be made upon our Christian Liberty ; till we come to grow in Grace, and to be established, strengthened, and settled in all Virtue.



SERMON

and united in all virtues. Great and to be established & strengthened. Christian Liberty: till we come to know in any attacks that shall be made upon our kind faith and be upon our guard against it to the designs of our Redeemer, to ends of this happy change conform our

S E R M O N X.

LUKE XV. 20.

*But when he was yet a great way off,
his Father saw him, and had com-
passion, and ran, and fell on his
neck, and kissed him.*

THE Parable from whence these
words are taken, is a lively repre-
sentation of the character and
behavior of a tender and indul-
gent Father, towards an extravagant and
undutiful Son. The scope and design of it,
is to shew the extensive good effects of
CHRIST'S Death to all those who are so hap-
py as to be admitted as members of his
mystical Body. The character of the Fa-
ther, and the different dispositions of his
two Sons, are generally supposed by most
Commentators to refer to the different Dis-

penfations of God to the Jewish and Gen-
 tile parts of mankind. And though they
 were both equally refpected, and had the
 fame claim and title to his paternal care and
 affection, as being defcended from the fame
 original: yet it pleafed infinite Wifdom,
 when both thefe were depraved by a long
 courfe of fin and corruption, to fet apart
 and diftinguifh one of them by fingular
 Bleffings and Favours; while he deferted
 and abandoned the other. He was pleafed,
 I fay, for fome particular inftances of Faith
 and Piety in fome of the defcendents of the
 elder Brother (by whom is here typically re-
 prefented the whole People and Nation of
 the Jews) to, extend his favor to the whole
 race of them, and to make them his pec-
 liar people. He entered into Covenant
 with them, at a time when the younger
 Brother was abfent from his Father, and
 wallowing in all the Impurities of a fenfual
 life; that is, when the Gentile world (which
 is here reprefented under the character of
 the Younger Brother) was lapfed into he-
 lary, and utterly loft to all fenfe of Virtue
 and Religion. Then it was that he was
 pleafed to felect them to himfelf, and to
 diftinguifh

distinguish between them and the other nations of the world: To exert himself in the defence of them against their adversaries, to increase their basket and their store, and to multiply them in the land. Then it was the great JEHOVAH was pleased to distinguish himself by signs and wonders, and to proclaim to the world that he was the God of *Abraham*, of *Isaac*, and of *Jacob*; that he wrought for his Name's sake, and "brought them out of the land of *Egypt* by a mighty hand and stretched out arm;" that he brought them into "a land flowing with milk and honey," notwithstanding their Infidelity in the wilderness, and gave them the lands of the Heathen, and the labors of the People in possession. Till at last, being wearied with their repeated corruptions and apostasies, he "gave them over into the enemy's hand, and made those that hated them to be Lords over them."

Thus they continued harassed and oppressed by the Gentile Powers, till the fullness of time came, when God was to "send forth his Son, not only to redeem those that were under the Law," but likewise to

dispel that darkness which had so long overshadowed the Heathen world; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of his people *Israel*. Then it was the Younger Brother began to rock himself from his sinful Lethargy, and upon the appearance of this Day-spring from on high, to arise and go to his Father. Then appeared the blessed effects of the Gospel-Covenant in the conversion of the Heathen world; which is here typically represented to us in the reception the younger Son met with from his Father. For before he had put in execution all the intended methods of his Repentance, even while he was going to implore a pardon of his injured and offended Parent, "Behold, when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

In discoursing therefore on these words I shall consider, *First*, The motives upon which the Father expressed this his great joy and complacency, intimated to us in the Text. And then,

Secondly, I shall shew how consistent this behavior of the Father was with the Mercy and Goodness of God to mankind under the Gospel dispensation.

The persons represented to us in this Parable, are, by some circumstances attending it, generally supposed to be men, who professed no other Religion than that of mere Nature. The Father, in particular, is described to us as acting under all the tender sentiments of such a state. And one would really imagine, at first sight, (considering the depravity and corruption of the Heathen world) that it was scarce possible there should be an instance of so much tenderness and forbearance, after so wilful and extravagant a proceeding. For we find, that after his Son had wasted his substance in riotous living; and had nothing left for his subsistence; when he began to be in want, and knew not where or how to appease his hunger, that then, and upon this motive only, he came to this resolution, "to arise, and go to his Father." So that he seems determined to this, not by way of choice, but of necessity. Without doubt his Conscience suggested to him many

uneasy apprehensions, which might have deterred him from his return, if he could have found out any other means of subsisting without it. But his extreme Want and Penury, the hard fare and difficulties he had experienced since the scene of his fortune was changed, his eating husks with the Swine, and the general bad reception he met with from the world, "that no man gave unto him;" these, I say, without doubt, were the sole motives which reduced him to have recourse to this expedient. For we find him, in the midst of his afflictions, among many other reflections, making use of this, "how many hired Servants of my Father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger;" as a consequence of which, he immediately subjoins, "I will arise, and go to my Father," and so on.

But though this might be the case, though he was prompted to this ingenuous resolution from the pinching Want and Misery which he often felt during the time he was impoverished, and absent from his home; yet what additional anguish must he suffer, and what

a variety of disagreeable reflections must his Conscience suggest to him now upon his return, and approaching his injured, and what he had but too much reason to apprehend, his incensed Father. However, we will take no farther notice of what might determine him to his return, or of what might occur to him in his journey, in order either to aggravate or extenuate his guilt, because the Father, who was absent, could not be supposed to be an evidence of this part of his behavior, and so consequently not capable of being affected or displeased with it.

Let us attend him to the place where he first beheld him, where that scene of tenderness and affection was first exhibited. Where, "while he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and was so moved at the sight of him, as to run, and fall on his neck, and kiss him." Who, that has been a witness of the guilt of the one, and of the many tender and endearing instances of affection in the other, could in the least imagine, according to the usual treatment of the world in such cases, that this was a meeting between a Father and a Son? Who,

that had been acquainted with the criminal conduct of his past life, that a few years ago saw him set out in such different circumstances, to what he returned in, could help being surpris'd at so great an alteration, or forbear imputing the cause of this change to his own Imprudence and Mismanagement? This, I say, is what might naturally happen to any one who had no other concern with him than having known him formerly, and been a witness of his present condition. But to see a Father, who had been so great a sufferer in mind and substance, who had parted with half of his living to gratify his Son's inclination; and underwent all the terrors and uneasinesses that could possibly occur upon his absence, and an apprehension of the event of it; to see him, I say, when the consequence shewed itself as bad as possible, when the Son had spent all, impoverished and in rags, so readily acknowledging him, and with such eagerness hastening to him, and embracing him, without the least previous notice or intimation of his great undutifulness, is something so very astonishing, that one would not imagine (had not he, who knoweth the hearts of all men, and

and was acquainted with every occurrence of life, assured us to the contrary) there could be an instance of so much lenity and forbearance, especially at a time when the hearts of Men were generally corrupt, and they had no other Religion to influence their conduct but that of mere Nature. But however the Father might be determined in favor of his Son, whatever degrees of tenderness he might cherish for him in his absence; yet one would imagine common prudence should have directed him to have concealed them at this juncture, and should have put him upon assuming his paternal Authority, and shewing a just Indignation for his scandalous and criminal abuse of his favors. For having wasted, with harlots and riotous living, what he, perhaps with much labor and toil, had carefully and industriously acquired. One would imagine, I say, some previous rebuke or mark of his displeasure should have been shewn, ere he had discovered the joy he conceived upon the sight of him, or the tenderness he expressed when he came up to him. But upon examination it will appear that this political conduct in the Father was not so absolutely necessary.

necessary. The Son, it is true, had been guilty of one of the highest acts of Imprudence and Extravagance; he had wasted, in a course of sin, the moiety of his Father's substance, and became utterly impenitent and irreclaimable, till extreme Want and Poverty put him upon a recollection of what he had been doing, and how he might gain a future subsistence. Without doubt, as I observed before, he laid many schemes, and contrived various ways of shifting, rather than go to his Father, as is pretty plain by his submitting himself to that mean employ of feeding Swine. However, all the hardships he met with, served as instruments only to excite him to this resolution, and make the best atonement the deplorable circumstances he was then in would admit of. He knew himself incapable ever of making full and sufficient amends for his past follies, by his future behavior. He was sensible he deserved no longer to be received as a Child, and therefore had provided for himself an employ suitable to his deserts, and had determined to intreat his Father to accept of him in the number of his domestics, or hired servants: Thereby thinking by his fidelity

fidelity and good services in such a station at least to make some satisfaction for his former offences, and by degrees to introduce himself once more into his favor. This poor overture was all that his sorrow and anguish of soul suggested to him in order to conciliate matters with his Father. He had recourse to no tricks or stratagems, as is but too common in cases of this nature; he made use of no pretence of unforeseen misfortunes, as causes of his present want and misery, which he might very easily have done, if he had intended to delude him; but confesses all the truth, owns that "he " had sinned before Heaven and in his sight," and, as a consequence of which, " that he " was no longer worthy to be called his Son." The Father indeed could not be assured, whether this Confession of his Son was real and sincere. But his judgment in this case was prevented by the voice of nature, and the tender impulse of paternal affection. He does not demur upon the sight of him whether he shall acknowledge him as a Son, or wait till he came to implore his forgiveness. His ravished eyes gave wings to his feet, and the transport of joy he was in upon

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on the sight of him, melted him into the utmost tenderness and compassion; "he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." However these unexpected instances of affection in the Father, do not prevent the Son's confession of his guilt. He repeats what he had premeditated and before resolved on, ere he knew this happy issue of their meeting. As a consequence of which he is taken into his Father's house; his nakedness covered with the best Robe; a Ring put on his hand; and Shoes on his feet. A sumptuous entertainment provided, and Guests invited to partake of the joy of his Son's return.

And the sole motive of all this was, because his Son had been *dead*, that is, by length of time, or other circumstances, supposed to be so, and was *alive again*; and was *lost*, that is, was in a part of the world where he might neither have inclination nor opportunity to give his Father the satisfaction of knowing where he was; and is *found*.

I shall therefore proceed, in the *second* place,

place, and shew how consistent this behavior of the Father towards his Son, was, with the Goodness of God to mankind in the Gospel dispensation.

It must be confessed indeed that it is a very imperfect way of illustrating any truth by comparisons drawn from things finite and infinite. There being such an immense difference between them with respect to their nature and essence. But since God has been pleased to communicate himself to mankind, and impart to them some faint resemblances of his Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, upon their obedience to his revealed will; and the Intercession of his dear Son; we cannot have recourse to any other instances whereby to form any idea of the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of God, than what discover themselves to us in the rational world. Hence it was, whenever men acted agreeably to reason; that our blessed Saviour took an opportunity of establishing some doctrines, and inculcating of them from instances drawn from natural life. The chapter from whence the Text is taken is made up with Parables, whereby our Saviour intended to shew the

Goodness

Goodness of God to us in the Gospel Covenant, and the joy there was in Heaven upon the conversion of a sinner. The instance he makes use of to illustrate these truths, are introduced upon a supposal that any person who was master of ten pieces, or in the other Parable of an hundred Sheep, whether, if he should lose one of these, he would not bestir himself and seek diligently till he found it. And if he should be so fortunate, whether the joy he should conceive upon that account would not be more, than what would arise from the safety of the other nine Pieces, or the ninety nine Sheep? Without doubt it would, because as the loss of it occasioned all his anxiety and uneasiness, so the recovery of it must not only remove his fears and apprehensions, but give him an unusual pleasure and satisfaction. So great, our Saviour tells us, as to call together his Friends and Acquaintance, and desire that they would partake of the joy he conceived upon that occasion.

From this instance of common life our blessed Saviour takes an opportunity of letting us know how and in what manner the Angels

Angels of God, those Spirits that minister to our Salvation, are affected with joy upon our Repentance and Humiliation: And shews us, in the conduct and behavior of the Father to his Son, how ready God is to assist us in the means of our recovery from a sinful state. For before the Prodigal had put in execution all the methods that were requisite to intitle him to Pardon and Forgiveness, even before he had given any proofs of his sorrow, and that he was truly penitent for his past crimes, "his Father " had compassion on him, and ran, and fell " on his neck, and kissed him." In like manner, our heavenly Father is ready to assist us in our first struggles from sin, and to promote our reformation by all the kind and salutary influences of his Grace. He meets us a great way off, and, provided our endeavors are sincere, he helps us on towards the accomplishing the great work of our Repentance, and the renewing in us a contrite and humble Spirit, the only acceptable and best sacrifice we can offer to him by way of atonement for our past abominations.

Reverend's love: and the great assistance
 Nay so industrious and good was our great
 Creator,

Creator, that he was pleased to make this one of the two great Conditions of our partaking of the Blessings of the Gospel Covenant; of our being admitted into the number of his adopted Children, and thereby made capable of Immortality. So great a lover of Souls, and so condescending to the infirmities of men, that he undertook to suffer in our nature and in our stead, to the end that we may return from our evil ways, and bring forth fruits meet for Repentance. The ever blessed Son of God, by his coming into the world, had no other design in view but the Good and Happiness of men. The whole tenor of his Life and Doctrine, as well as the event of his Mission, do sufficiently evince this great Truth. By his death he paid the great price of our ransom; and by his life and doctrine he left us a most admirable pattern of a virtuous and most holy life. By the one he has opened a way to Life and Immortality, and by the other he has chalked out the paths that lead to it. All the circumstances of our Redemption are so many lively instances of our Redeemer's love; and the great affliction and hardship he underwent when he became incarnate,

incarnate, should at the same time that they excite our Wonder, raise our Gratitude and Esteem for him, who has so undeservedly been our great Benefactor. At least we should endeavor, though we come infinitely short of the pattern, to follow his steps, and do our part in some measure to deserve the name and appellation of Christians. To shew that we have some ingenuity in our nature, and that the influences of his Grace are not totally vain and ineffective. To this end we should imitate him in those Virtues he was chiefly conversant in, and in the discharge of which he seemed to take the greatest delight and satisfaction. Let us consider only that "he came to seek and save that which was lost;" that when this "day-spring from on high visited us," we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope and without God in the world; that at that time we were very Gentiles, carried away by dumb Idols, even as we were led, and as sheep going astray; that notwithstanding all this degeneracy and corruption, he was pleased to communicate the blessings of his coming, and to make us sharers with his own Elect.

Nay it is remarkable that he spent the greatest part of his ministerial life and conversation with Publicans and Sinners. That this was one main occasion of the Jews indignation, and one of the great causes of their infidelity. For it was matter of great surprise to them, that *He*, who made himself so very remarkable by his Miracles, should yet stoop so low as to associate, and that frequently, with persons who were reputed infamous and immoral. This put them upon ascribing all his mighty works to the assistance of the Prince of Darkness; though, if they would have considered, they must have known that there was a direct difference between the works themselves, and the nature, power, and capacity of him to whom they ascribed them. They were the compassionate effects of infinite Goodness; a quality as opposite to the nature of Satan or his ministers, as light to darkness.

And therefore these gracious methods, which the Son of God took for our recovery from sin, should excite in us the same tenderness and affection one towards another. And we should not think too much of, or

defer too long pardoning the greatest crimes or offences of others towards us, since God hath been so gracious as to forgive ours. "They that sow in tears," and are truly penitent, should receive the fruit of their repentance, and "reap in joy." And the Father in the Parable, in all the circumstances of his conduct to his Son, acted agreeably to the dictates of Nature, and the gracious design of the Christian Institution. He was merciful according to his ability, as "our Father which is in Heaven is merciful." He killed the fatted calf, as a testimony of his joy for his Son's return: but God sacrificed his SON to redeem us.

Let us, therefore, seeing the purchase is so inestimable, do all that in us lies to make it effectual, by a holy life and conversation: Let us, now we are returned to the Bishop and Pastor of our Souls, shew forth our gratitude to "him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light;" and never let us forget that we were once in the condition of the Prodigal Son; and then, I believe, we shall think it our Duty

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to

to bless and praise God, as they did, to
 " make merry and be glad, because we
 " were dead once, and are alive again, and
 " were lost, and are found."

And the
 " keep in joy"
 the in the Parable, in all the circumstances
 of his conduct to his Son, acted as a powerful
 digress of nature, and the glorious design
 of the Christian Institution. He was inter-
 duced according to his ability as " our Fa-
 " ther which is in Heaven is glorified." The
 killed the father, as a testimony of his
 joy for his Son's sacrifice, but God sacrificed
 his Son to redeem us.



Let us, therefore, seeing the purchase is
 so precious, do all that in us lies to make
 it effectual, by a holy life and conversation:
 let us now we are returned to the Father
 and Father of our souls, then to our
 friends to " him who hath called us out
 of darkness into his marvellous light,"
 and never let us forget that we were once in
 the condition of the Prodigal Son: and
 that we shall think it our Duty
 to return to our Father, and to be found in his arms.

SERMON



known him well, I think eyes did see
my indignation, yet being imperfect: and

S E R M O N XI.

And as yet there were none of them. And
which day day were laid down, when

Oh! how dear are thy
spirits himself. Oh! how dear are thy

PSALM CXIX. 73.

*Thy hands have made me and fashioned
ed me: O give me understanding;
that I may learn thy Command-
ments.*

"we are his people, and sheep of his
pasture."

THE Petition in the Text appears
to be the plain and obvious result
of the preceding part of the verse.
And it is observable, that not only in this
but in many other parts of the writings of
holy David, where he is led into the con-
templation of God, as his Creator, he seems
raised to a more than ordinary degree of
Piety and Devotion. This in Psalm cxxxix.
14, 15, and 16. "I will praise thee, for I
am fearfully and wonderfully made, mar-
velous are thy works, and that my soul

he says

" knoweth right well. Thine eyes did see
 " my substance, yet being imperfect; and
 " in thy book were all my members written,
 " which day by day were fashioned, when
 " as yet there were none of them." And
 then, in a devout exclamation, he thus ex-
 presses himself, " Oh! how dear are thy
 " counsels to me. **X O G O D**! how great is the
 " sum of them!" And, as he was truly
 sensible of this himself, so he seems sollicit-
 ous to communicate it to others. " Know
 " ye, that the Lord he is God; it is he
 " that hath made us, and not we ourselves;
 " we are his people, and sheep of his
 " pasture."

THE Petition in the Text appears
 Now this consideration of God, as our
 Creator, is not only apt to beget in us suit-
 able conceptions of his Goodness; but it
 helps likewise to confirm our Belief in, and
 dependence on his Providence. As our
 Maker, he is the object of our highest Re-
 spect and Veneration; and we can scarce
 consider him in the capacity of a Creator,
 without some assurances of his Protection
 and Care over us. And as this naturally
 leads us to have recourse to him for his as-
 sistance

sistance in all our wants and distresses; so it
 inspires us with the pleasing expectation of
 an additional degree of Happiness; upon our
 departure from *this* into a future state. For
 when we reflect upon God, as the great
 Father of Spirits, and the sole Cause and
 Maker of the Universe; and at the same
 time consider, that the whole frame of it is
 supported by his Almighty Power; there
 is something in such a reflection that will
 fill us with the most devout awe and admi-
 ration. And if we carry the thought a lit-
 tle farther, and consider to what end this
 world was created, and why we ourselves
 should be produced into being from bare
 matter; endowed with rational faculties and
 distinguished by the divine form and image
 of our Maker, and so far set above the se-
 veral species of the animal world; as we
 cannot but infer his more than ordinary
 Care and Providence over us, from such a
 consideration, so we cannot but be assured
 that he intends to increase our happiness, as
 well as enlarge our faculties, if we conduct
 ourselves agreeably to the purposes of his
 bounty and great indulgence. So that here
 is the great advantage which those who pro-

felf and adore a fupreme Being, have, above
 fuch who fay, "there is no God." The firft
 affign a fufficient Caufe of their exiftence;
 acknowledge that their fouls were derived
 from the Father of Spirits; and their Rea-
 fon and Underftanding, from an infinitely
 wife, intelligent, and powerful Being; while
 as the other pretends to life from mere mat-
 ter, and fenfe-forgotten. They affirm,
 that the whole race of mankind were the
 original offspring of a material world, and
 that their Reason and Underftanding was
 the natural result of it.

the natural result of it. But there is something so very absurd in this way of arguing, as I scarce deserve a confutation. There is as wide a difference betwixt Thought and Matter, as there is between Heaven and Earth. So that for men to ascribe Reason and Understanding, the inward Freedom and Liberty of their minds, to the Power and Influence of matter, which is not only void of all these excellencies and perfections, but is likewise for ever incapable of them; their Philosophy, I say in this case, is as senseless as the Idolater's Prayer which the Book of *Wisdom* describes

ON THE PSALM CXIX. 73. 249

to us in the xiith chapter and 18th verse,
 " For health he calleth upon that which is
 " weak; for life, prayeth to that which is
 " dead; for aid, humbly beleecheth that
 " which hath least means to help; and for
 " a good journey, asketh of that which can
 " not set a foot forwards." This is exactly
 the case of the Atheist; he ascribes a Being,
 which is full of desires, to that which is life-
 less and indolent, and has none at all; he
 derives consciousness from that which has
 no knowledge, and liberty from necessity.
 Whereas he who seriously considers the ex-
 cellencies and endowments of a reasonable
 soul, can ascribe them to no other Author
 than to Him, from whom the Psalmist ac-
 knowledges to have received his Being,
 " Thy hands have made me and fashioned
 " me :—" And then from the consideration of
 God as his Creator, he very justly, and with
 the strictest propriety, addresses him in the
 words that follow, " O give me understand-
 " ing, that I may learn thy commandments."

The Doctrine contained in these words
 will, I think, be very fully explained under
 the two following Particulars, and of believ

First,

First, In the person to whom the petition is directed, which is God. And

Secondly, In the subject-matter of the petition itself: "O give me understanding, that I may learn thy Commandments."

First then, for the person to whom the petition is directed, which is God.

The state of man in this life, however distinguished from other created Beings, could never claim an exemption from a superior control and dependency. If we should descend to the utmost perfection of our nature, where Knowledge, Holiness, and other emblems of divine excellencies exerted themselves in their proper operations, we shall soon be convinced of this great truth: Upon the first discovery of the material world God was pleased to make to our great Progenitor, he could readily discern the Power and Wisdom of their Contriver. At that time there was a universal entire rectitude in all his faculties. And he was so enriched with knowledge, that when Nature was unveiled to him, he could presently discover

her

her mysterious operations. When the creatures came to pay their Homage to him, we are informed, "whatsoever he called them that was the name thereof;" and their very names expressed their natures. His knowledge extended itself throughout the whole visible creation, from the glorious luminary the Sun, to the glow-worm that shines in the hedge. And it is observable, that this knowledge was not acquired by study, or long application to Arts or Sciences, but it was the immediate gift, the gracious communication of the great Father of Lights.

But farther, His knowledge not only extended itself to the material part of things, but it gradually ascended, by the several ranks of beings, to the universal Cause. The stupendous fabric of Heaven and Earth afforded him the clearest characters of that glorious Power which produced them. At God's command, he could clearly discern that the Heavens and all their Hosts were created. This must of course lead him to contemplate the Immensity of the Divine Essence; and by the consideration of the *Immensity*, he might ascend to the *Eternity*

of

of God! And to be eternal without Beginning, and infinite without bounds; infer one another, and necessarily exist in the same subject. For it is impossible any thing that is produced by another and has a beginning, should not be limited in its nature by the Cause that produced it. But this limitation did by no means abate the vigour of his Understanding, or render him incapable of duly reflecting, as upon the other works of God, so particularly on Himself. Whether he considered his lowest part, the Body, the most artificial and beautiful piece of the visible world; whether he was led to reflect upon the contrivance, of its parts, together with their proportion and exactness; its noble and majestic stature; becoming the supremacy of his dominion; and an Observer of the Heavens. These reflections, as they afforded him an unusual pleasure and admiration, so they must likewise naturally lead him to acknowledge the great Power and Wisdom of their Author. But when he carried his reflection a little farther, when he considered by what internal principle his Body was actuated, together with its excellent endowments, all the Praise, Gratitude and Devotion that a Creature is capable

capable of rendering to his Maker must be the necessary result of such a consideration.

It was from a contemplation of a like nature, we so often meet with the devout exclamations of *David*; as, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in Wisdom hast thou made them all," and the like. And if he could discover such wonderful and divine wisdom in the Creation, when the vigour of human understanding was so much impaired by the fall; how much more must *Adam*, happy under the full enjoyment of an undepraved soul, and blessed with the divine intercourse of his Maker, be excited to adore that infinitely wise and powerful Being, which not only "breathed into his nostrils the Breath of Life;" and stamped upon him the impress of his own Image, as the peculiar object of his creating power; but at the same time imparted to him maturity of Reason and Understanding. He was in his full perfection of manhood as soon as he began to exist; and all his faculties exerted themselves with the utmost propriety. It is scarce possible to conceive how much ravished and overjoyed *Adam* must be in such circumstances; to awake into Being,
and

and to find himself on a sudden endowed with Reason and Understanding, with Life and Sense, and all the powers of a rational Soul, of which he knew nothing before; it cannot, I say, be imagined how welcome the first discovery of this new happiness was to him. Neither is there any reason that this happiness should be less regarded by us, because we have longer enjoyed it.

It is true, indeed, that we did not come into the world as he did. The scenes we pass before we attain to a mature Age, Vigour, and Understanding, are apt to make our existence too familiar to us, and so it comes not to have so much of our thought and consideration as it really deserves; and perhaps the evils to which it is subject, since the fall, have conducted pretty much to encourage this inadvertence. But this should be an argument of our farther gratitude and attention; since every day we are permitted to live, since that defection, is a fresh argument of the divine Goodness towards us; and consequently, should be a prevailing motive for us to do all we are able to recover our original purity and perfection.

In a word, whenever we are led into a contemplation of God, as our Creator, as it must naturally awaken in us all the sense of Gratitude and Admiration; so it must excite us to put in execution all the methods of Duty and Obedience. This we find was the effect of the Royal Psalmist's reflection in the Text, "Thy hands have made me; and fashioned me," and then, to shew how ready and desirous he was to shew himself in some measure deserving his existence, he begs of God that he would "give him understanding, that he might learn his Commandments."

We will therefore, as I proposed under my *second* particular, proceed to shew the subject-matter of this petition; "O give me understanding, that I may learn thy Commandments."

Now by this request we are taught to understand, that the knowledge of Religion was preferred by *David* to all other considerations; and that he looked upon the commands of God as of the utmost moment and importance in this life; and therefore,

fore, as the due execution of them was the only method to procure the divine favour (which was the highest consolation a creature could aspire after) so he took care in his religious addresses to supplicate God, that he would, principally and above all other things, pour into his heart such a share of Prudence and Understanding, that he might be able to distinguish between the Wisdom of this world, and *that* which cometh from above, that he might apply his heart to fulfil his statutes always, even to the end. For this he was satisfied was no impertinent curiosity, or idle amusement, it was an acquaintance with what was of the highest concern, as well as of the greatest use to him. It was to know the will and pleasure of Him who was his best friend, of Him who would take vengeance on them that put the knowledge of the Laws from them. And therefore it must prove the only security of his everlasting interest, as well as the surest guide to him to escape the wrath to come. So that all other accomplishments of the mind, the knowledge of every other Art and Science, if a man was acquainted with all the secrets of Nature, were he able to
measure

measure all the distant and most remote parts of the universe, and call all the stars by their right names, y^et, if he were destitute of the knowledge of his Duty to his Maker, this ignorance would more than balance all his other intellectual accomplishments. So many rich stores, unattended with any religious improvement, would prove a severe reflection upon him for having been most solicitous in the search of what did not require so much of his time and pains to be acquainted with; and neglecting, with so much indifference, what he should have prosecuted with the utmost zeal and intenseness. It is this that makes *David* express himself in such high extasies and raptures, when he reflects upon the superior excellence and perfection of the Divine Law. "LORD," says he, "I see that all things come to an end, but thy commandments are exceeding broad. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments. The Law of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver." And indeed all other knowledge has but a narrow and limited use, and is some way or other only subservient to the conveniences and accommodations

commodations of this transient life, by the acquaintance with our Duty to God, of a much larger extent, the usefulness of it reaches beyond the Grave, and launches our souls into the vast ocean of Eternity; in a word, we shall be the better for it to endless ages.

But there is another circumstance which may serve to give us undeniable proof of the great importance of the argument I am now upon; which is, that without our knowledge of, or acquaintance with the Law of God, the benefit of our creation would have been imperfect. The sole end of our existence, could not be barely to exist. That bright particle of the Divinity, our Reason, could not be intended to direct us to the satisfying our sensual appetites, or to lead us to the knowledge and experience only of things temporal. No, it was by this we were made capable of discerning our own happy situation, and of being convinced how much we are indebted to the supreme Being, for our Creation, Preservation, and every other blessing of life. It was by this we were made sensible that the

same God that created us, expected that we should serve and obey Him to the utmost of our capacity. And it was by this light that we were directed to have recourse to Him in all our wants and distresses. These are the principal ends to which our Reason should direct us. And they are not only the foundation of our present happiness, but (which is more considerable) of all our large expectations in another world.

So that the very nature of our Being, the form in which we are made, and the qualifications with which we are endowed, do all conspire to assure us, that the great cause of our existence could not be purely to display the exquisite power of God in creating, or that we had our Being and Understanding only in the same manner with the beasts that perish. That candle of the LORD within us, without the assistance of farther discoveries, is sufficient to dispel such gross conceptions, and influence us unto higher considerations. The nature of the soul of man is such, that it cannot be annihilated but by Him that made it; and as the divine Architect placed it in the body

as a guide and influence to its conduct, and as the receptacle of all its pains and pleasures in this life, so there can be no room to doubt of its existence in an hereafter state. Nay, such is the nature of it, that in its separation from the body all her faculties will exert themselves with the greater freedom, and there will be nothing to take off from her joyous reflections, or to mitigate her painful apprehensions. In the same state she left the body, under the same circumstances will she remain; though perhaps with higher sensations of additional happiness or misery. So that the due care of our Being in this life, together with the proper application of it to the purposes for which it was given us, will always secure to us all the happiness that reason and reflection are capable of producing. As, on the other hand, an undue attention to the importance of our existence, and the gracious ends proposed by it, will prove the fatal inlet of all our misery.

A very little reasoning with ourselves will lead us into a clear acknowledgment from whom we derive our Being, the present

state

state of this world could not have existed *ab aeterno*; some prior cause must have been the Author of that universal order and harmony which is very discernible in this lower world. To have recourse to that exploded, as well as infatuated argument, of Chance and Contingency, would be giving up the due result of *qum* Reason; and abusing the very name of Philosophy. The several species of Beings, if produced *ab origine*, from this hypothesis must still have subsisted by the same original method of production. If a fortuitous concourse of atoms contributed to the constitution of the first respective pairs, after their dissolution, the like fortuitous concourse must have continued to have repaired the loss of them. If this had succeeded there would have been some difficulty in invalidating the argument now before us. But this is not the case; the several orders of Beings, setting aside the first and immediate work of God, (the Angelical World) are kept up and preserved by the ordinary method of Generation; and, as they are all of a finite nature, this method could not have existed to all eternity. It is evident therefore, that the several species of Beings

which inhabit this lower world, as they are produced by others, and are preserved and kept up by successive generation, must, at *origine*, have been produced themselves by some pre-existing cause, which, considering the Power, Wisdom, and Contrivance that are requisite to complete so great a work, could be no less than an omnipotent all-wise self-existing Being.

And as it could be nothing less than an act of the highest Goodness to call so many nothings into Being, and to provide for their welfare and continuance in this life, so we may be assured he intends to raise us to higher degrees of Bliss and Happiness, if we fulfil the design of our creation. So that when we consider God as our Creator, and at the same time reflect on the happy situation in which he has placed us, and the gracious provision he has made for our well-being in this life; together with the certain assurances he has afforded us of future happiness, we must be guilty of the most sottish inadvertency, as well as the highest ingratitude; if we do not, with holy *David*, use our utmost endeavors to attain that understand-

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ing which will make us truly sensible of his Goodness in creating us, and very much conduce to awaken our strict attention to secure that happiness which is reserved for us in a future state.

The Subject I am now upon is of so large and copious a nature, that it will not permit me to consider all the arguments which might be offered to convince us of the Author as well as the Design of our Creation. And therefore, as the time will not suffer me at present farther to corroborate what has been advanced and recommended to your imitation in the foregoing Discourse, I shall only beg leave to trespass upon your patience by observing to you, in an instance or two, how naturally subservient to the great end of Religion are the frequent and due considerations of God, as our Creator.

Now these, whenever we are under the kindly influences of our Reason and Understanding, assure us, that the Author of our Being is an Eternal, Immortal, All-wise and Self-existing Being. They likewise give us the clearest informations that, as He made

the world, so it ought, nay it must, be governed by him. This is so plain a consequence, that a man must be abandoned to common sense to contradict it. To say that God created the world, is, in the strictest sense, to assert that he is the Proprietor of it; but to deny his direction or government in it, is absolutely to deprive him of that property. Creation then is the source and origin of Dominion: God's sovereignty therefore must extend as far back as to the Being of things themselves. As to Inheritance, Gift, Purchase, and the like; these wear in them the visible marks of former propriety. But he that produces a thing *de novo*, and calls *that* into a State of Being, which never knew what it was to be before, confers upon himself such a title with regard to the thing produced, as must set him above all dependence and derivation. We cannot, it is true, fully conceive the manner of Creation, because it is the act of infinite Power; much less can we comprehend how a whole world should suddenly start up into order and being, without either seed or plant; but yet we are enabled to prove that there is such a thing as Creation; and that things are produced

produced into Being which were not in Being before: this we are assured of by our own experience. We are now, blessed be God, happy in the enjoyment of reasonable Souls and Understandings. Time was when we were not so. We must be sensible that the commencement of our Being is, as it were, but of yesterday; and that our condition in this life is precarious and dependent; and that we lay at the mercy of our Creator, whether we should or should not be. And therefore, as he was pleased to exert his Omnipotence in creating us, we should think it no slavery to be under his subjection. But if we should be ever so restless, ever so rebellious, this would by no means invalidate his dominion, or destroy his claim to that Obedience and Subjection which is due to him from all his creatures.

But, *secondly*, If we consider God as our Governor, as well as Creator, we cannot but be led to reflect upon the nature and extent of his dominion. Holy David has asserted the divine Government of the world in such unlimited terms, that there can be no room to doubt of his sincerity in the belief of it.

it. "The Heavens, says he, are thine, the
"Earth also is thine, the round World and
"all that dwell therein. Thou hast made
"the North and the South. Thou hast a
"mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high
"is thy right hand. Righteousness and
"Judgment are the habitation of thy seat,
"Mercy and Truth shall go before thy face."
These are such strong and visible characters
of God's Creation and Government, of his
Mercy and Justice, and his other divine at-
tributes, as must serve to convince us, that
as God made all things, so he governs them
by laws adapted to their respective natures.
And therefore from us, who are endowed
with Reason and Understanding, he expects
a reasonable service; and that we should
live up to the excellency of our natures.
We should do well therefore, when we con-
sider God as our Creator and Governor, to
reflect how we may best answer the design
of our Being, and by what regular steps
we may proceed to the final accomplishment
of it. To take into our thoughts from
whose hands we at first came, and in whose
hands we at present remain, and "from
"whom are the issues of Life and Death;"
and

ON PSALM CXIX. 73. 267

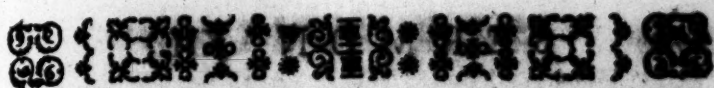
and we then cannot help, in the devout transports of our souls, giving Him all the Praise and Adoration we are capable of, and humbly intreating Him that he would "give us Understanding that we may learn "his Commandments;" which will not only procure to us every thing that is dear and valuable in this life; but will likewise qualify us to attain to that glorious end for which we were created, the enjoyment of God and Happiness to all Eternity. To which blessed state God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the sake of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*



SERMON

and we then cannot help in the devout transports of our souls giving Him all the Praise and Adoration we are capable of, and heartily intreating Him that he would "give us Understanding that we may learn his Commandments;" which will not only procure to us every thing that is dear and valuable in this life; but will likewise qualify us to attain to that glorious end for which we were created, the enjoyment of God and Happiness to all Eternity. To which blessed state God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the sake of our Lord

JESUS CHRIST. Amen.



S E R M O N XII.

LUKE XI. 28.

*Yea, rather blessed are they that hear
the word of God and keep it.*

THESE words are occasionally introduced by our blessed Lord. And if we have recourse only to the 14th verse of this chapter, we may easily be informed upon what account they came to be mentioned. Our blessed Lord was casting out a devil that was dumb in the presence of a great multitude. And though it was a work evidently supernatural, and sufficient to evince the Power and Authority by which he acted; yet such was the prejudice of some among them, that instead of exciting their admiration, or gaining their esteem, instead of respecting his person, and revering his authority, they wickedly

SERMON XII.

wickedly attributed this miraculous cure to the assistance of *Beelzebub*; whilst others unreasonably insisted upon a farther demonstration of his Mission and Authority: "They sought of him a sign from Heaven."

To that most blasphemous reflection of the former, our blessed Lord replies, and refutes it in the following manner: "Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house, falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? That is, till Societies, whether greater or less, must necessarily suffer a diminution of their power, and a decrease of their members, by the continuance of intestine broils and divisions among them. If therefore one evil spirit or instrument of *Beelzebub* can eject another, who is in possession of a person consigned to him by the power of Satan, and the permission of Heaven, it would be to little or no purpose for the devil or his agents to lay baits for mankind, or to take so much pains to seduce them; because what the one did to promote the interest of his kingdom, would be in the power of the

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the other to defeat; and this opposition must at last terminate in the destruction of the power itself upon which this kingdom is erected. Besides, they might have considered, that the miracle wrought was a work of goodness, a quality as opposite to the nature of Satan or his Ministers, as light to darkness. So that this reflection could have no other foundation but the great prejudice and perverseness of its authors. But that this argument might carry with it the stronger conviction, he proceeds in the following instance to observe to them, that no one, without a superior power to that of the devil, could be supposed to disarm and conquer him; "When a strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace. " But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." By this he intimates to us the great strength and cunning of the Tempter, which was not capable of being foiled but by the Divine assistance; to which all other human and diabolical power and artifice must submit.

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The person possessed, without doubt, had been guilty of some crime to deserve the punishment inflicted on him; and as the devil got possession by the divine permission, nothing but a divine power could eject him. Thus whilst he is clearing himself from the aspersion of the Pharisees, and proving by the strongest arguments that what they had urged, in order to discredit his person, and lessen the efficacy of the Miracle, could proceed from nothing else but mere rancour and prejudice; a woman of the company, from an inward conviction of the certainty of the Miracle, and the truth of his Doctrine, in an holy extasy cries out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked."

Indeed it does not appear from St Matthew's Gospel, where this transaction is more circumstantially related, that our Saviour's having foiled the objection of the Pharisees, was the immediate occasion of this exclamation, but that it was owing to the coming of his Mother and Brethren at the time he was confuting

futing the Pharisees, who had attributed it to the assistance of the devil. Upon which, one in the company told him that "his Mother and his Brethren were without, desiring to speak with him." So that it was the mention of his Mother that gave occasion for the woman's crying out as above; though, to be sure, the remote cause was that of the conviction of the Miracle, and the confuting his opponents. And this is what is the immediate occasion of the words in the Text, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

It will from hence therefore be incumbent on us to shew what sort of attention to the word of God is here required, in order to make it effectual in our lives and conversations. To this purpose I shall observe to you,

First, How we are to prepare ourselves before we come into the House of God,

And,

Secondly, How we are to behave during our attendance there.

And first, How we are to prepare ourselves before we come into the House of God.

Indeed, one would imagine there could not be much to say upon this head by way of reflection upon past behavior, or by way of instruction, how we are to demean ourselves for the time to come. The many obligations we are under as Christians, to the due and decent attendance on public worship, should be sufficient restraints from liberties of this nature. But since experience assures us that the greatest obligations are not always attended with a due efficacy on the minds of men, and that our behavior at these solemn seasons is not so exactly suited to the Place we are in, and the Person we are addressing; it may be necessary just to mention how we should prepare ourselves before we come into the House of God: In order as well to prevent giving offence to our Christian Brethren, as to the due Performance of Prayer and Hearing. And here I shall not insist upon those frequent preparations which should necessarily precede our daily attendance on public wor-

ship; because our different Callings and Professions may not without great prejudice to ourselves and families admit of such an attendance. I shall only recommend the due observation of the stated returns of the Sabbath, which, as they are institutions of general Rest and release from worldly Labours, so they are of universal obligation to be kept by us in a holy and religious manner. And I believe it may be presumed, that the man who sets apart the Sabbath as a day of Rest and holy Contemplation, and is not wanting at other times in his private returns of duty to his Maker, will the more easily be dispensed with as to his *daily* attendance on public worship, when his temporal affairs will not admit of it. So that for the encouragement of those who have it not in their power to be so constant in their attendance in the House of God, I would recommend a due use and application of this great Day of Rest, this perpetually and universally binding Statute of the God of *Israel*. It were needless at present to point out the due observation of the several parts of it, if I had not engaged myself under this Head to

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show what Preparation was necessary ere we come to the House of God.

And I think I cannot discharge myself from this obligation better, than by observing, that before and during the intervals of public worship, we employ our time in private Prayer and Meditation; that we labor to bring ourselves to so religious a habit of mind, as to be always qualified to attend and address the Throne of Grace, both in public and private;—that we may be able to survey our transactions for the Week past without the least remorse, and hope for the continuance of God's Grace for the time to come. How natural is it to infer, that a man who is thus careful and vigilant to attend upon the LORD, not only at these, but at other seasons, without distraction, that such a one is "not a *Hearer* only, but a *Doer* of the word." He is sensible it will be to no purpose to express his zeal to his Maker, if in his transactions with his Brethren he transcends the bounds of justice;—he knows that no mercy can be expected at the Throne of Grace, when he hath denied it to his fellow-creatures;—he is assured that no sta-
tion

ion or scene of life can justify the breach of the Law of God:—that nothing can fit him for a divine intercourse; nothing prove a more powerful friend and intercessor for him to the King of kings, than his Honesty and Virtue. And as these have cost him a great deal of time and labour to attain, so he is more than ordinarily careful in the due use and improvement of them. Nothing can induce him to attempt any thing that is in itself unwarrantable. He wisely surveys the good or evil tendency and consequence of every action before he engages in it; and is solicitous only in what manner it may be best performed. His dealings with his fellow-creatures are intirely influenced by the dictates of his own impartial judgment, and that universal law of justice, in "doing to all as he would they should do to him."

And if we consider him in his religious applications to his Maker, we shall find him actuated by the same care and vigilance. He never offers his petitions to the Throne of Grace with a discomposed or unsatisfied mind. His own actions are his justification, and

and his prayers are heard in private, as his actions are approved in public life. Thus it will behove us to behave, if we would pay that regard which is due to that part of the Sabbath which is left to ourselves; ere we approach the Temple of the Lord, "the habitation of the mighty God of Jacob."

And as what I have spoken to under this Head may be sufficient to qualify us ere we come into the house of God, I shall proceed, in the

Second place, to make use of some Directions how we are to behave during our attendance there.

The first I shall recommend to this purpose, is a just conception of the Supreme Being.

Now as the foundation of all Religion, as well as the result of all Virtue, is owing to the universal belief of a supreme Being; so there cannot be a greater incitement to the due performance of the duties we owe him, than by conceiving of him according

to the greatness of his Wisdom, Power and Goodness. A superior degree of either of these, even in our fellow-creatures, naturally demands our reverence and respect; and it is an argument of great dissimulation to be wanting in these acknowledgments. If therefore a just conception of persons in their respective stations, or with regard to their several abilities, be a ready method to instruct us how to behave with respect to our fellow-creatures; the same way of thinking will naturally direct us to give the "LORD the honour due unto his Name;" to hear his word with reverence and attention, to approach his dwelling with a suitable preparation, to worship him in "the Beauty of Holiness," and to "give thanks" to him in the congregation from the "ground of the heart." Now these being duties we are all of us severally obliged to as creatures, nothing, as has been already observed, can be a greater incitement to the due performance of them, than by conceiving of God, as he certainly is, infinitely Great, Just and Good.

The Place we are now in was originally
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designed for a place of divine Worship; hither we were to assemble to offer up our Prayers for our daily wants and necessities; hither we were to come to return our Praise and Thanksgiving for the blessings and conveniences of life; and hither we were to repair to testify unto *Israel* any particular vouchsafement of Providence, any single act in the intercourse of life, of his mercy towards us. What a Profanation then must we be guilty of, if we abuse these holy purposes, either by absenting ourselves from these usual and set times of Devotion, or by attending in a careless and thoughtless manner:—When by our behaviour we seem neither to be affected with a sense of duty to God, or to pay the least regard to the institutions of our superiors; when we oppose our own private judgment to the Authority of the Church, and admit of no Discipline, but that which meets with our own private approbation?—When men once come to entertain these favourable and partial prejudices of their own understanding; and to be thus careless in their Prayers, which is the principal mean of present and future happiness:—If they can dispense with a duty

to strictly enjoined by their Maker, — it cannot be expected that they will pay a due regard to what is preached by his Ministers. If the Fundamentals of Religion cannot engage their attention; if neither the Oracles of CHRIST, the Portions of Scripture, nor the Devotion of holy David, are able to excite their fervor and attention; — the voice "of the Preacher, charm he never so wisely," will be to no purpose.

What I would recommend in the second place, concerning our behavior in the House of God, is a serious reflection on our own frailties and infirmities, together with the general experience of the wants and necessities we labour under, as well as the pains and miseries we are exposed to, in our present condition; and our inability to provide for the one, or prevent the other. And this, I am persuaded, will naturally direct us to approach the Throne of Grace with a suitable Address and Preparation; because it is God alone that is able to supply the former, and preserve us from the latter. And as this will naturally excite in us a due fervor and devotion in Prayer, so it will of course

course direct us to hear the word of God with reverence and attention.

To the want of this due regard to ourselves, and serious consideration of the Divine Being, we may justly attribute all that Inreverence and Indevotion which are too frequently to be observed in our Religious Assemblies. And this must unavoidably continue, as well to the offence of good men, as to the great scandal of public worship, so long as we come unprepared to the House of God; without considering our own weakness and dependance;—without the least previous consultation of any duty to be performed by a Creature to a Creator;—without the least grateful acknowledgment of mercies received;—and perhaps without the least devout request for his future Blessings.

Thirdly, Another direction for our good behavior in the House of God, is to guard against the intrusion of worldly cares and considerations.

Our blessed Saviour, in his Parable of the Sower,

Bower, gives us a lively representation of the
 love of this world, and how incapable it
 rendered them to perform their Duty as they
 ought, and how apt they were to be capti-
 vated and insnared by it. He tells us, that
 no less than three parts out of four were de-
 verted from their religious concerns by their
 close adherence to the things of this life.
 And it is upon this account that we find him
 so often recommending a strict attention to
 the Word of God, as a matter of the great-
 est consequence to the government of them-
 selves; and drawing suitable characters from
 the sinful omission or the due observance of
 it. To the due observance of it, he ascribes
 the character and marks of the most con-
 siderable *Wisdom*; and does not scruple to
 own them as his highest and tenderest Re-
 lations: for, "Whoever," says he, "shall do
 the will of my Father which is in Hea-
 ven, the same is my Brother, and Sister,
 and Mother." And those who neglect
 to do it, he charges with extreme folly in
 this life, and threatens with eternal misery
 in the next. "He that rejecteth me, and
 heareth not my words, hath one that judg-
 eth him. The Word that I have spoken,
 " the

the same shall judge him in the last day. This perverseness was the main occasion of our blessed Lord's denouncing that severe wo upon *Ghorazin* and *Bethsaida*, and other Cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. And the cause of this unreasonable prejudice among the Jews, was the very same with that I am now speaking of. The meanness of our Saviour's appearance did not by any means suit their expectations; so that his divine Discourses and Miracles were often disregarded. Their false notions of worldly grandeur, their strong prepossessions in favour of a temporal Prince, who would prove their Deliverer, and subdue the other Empires and Kingdoms of the world, so prejudiced them against the person and circumstances of our Saviour, that they absolutely rejected the strongest convictions of this Messiahship, because repugnant to their own false and towering conceptions of worldly grandeur. Thus we see how far the love of the World is apt to influence men with regard to their private sentiments, and the Word that I have spoken, and the

and what an enemy it is to their due performance of religious Duties.

Fourthly, Another sure motive to our behaving as we ought in the House of God, is a sincere desire of Information.

It is a common instance in life, from a frequent experience of our own errors, to distrust our own judgment, and confide in that of others. And indeed without a variety of opinions, chiefly founded upon passions, humors and prejudices, there would be little or no room left for Instruction. And though scarce any man could be so unreasonable as to approve of what is forbid, or to oppose what is recommended to our observation in the moral system of the Gospel; though, I say, it may be against Reason and Nature to violate them in the first and most obvious sense; yet we are often guilty of omitting and transgressing them in the smaller and more subordinate points. Every man's capacity will not direct him to distinguish a Duty throughout the several degrees and extent of it, nor to avoid a Sin in all its various shapes and disguises. There

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is too much of corrupt Nature still left to prejudice him against the thorough practice of Virtue; and nothing but rebukes and seasonable remonstrances can restrain him from sinful prejudices.

This is one great task of the Preacher: and as he is supposed to be acquainted with the baits by which the ignorant and prejudiced are oft-times deluded, so it is his business to lay before them a proper representation how they were deceived, and not to forget to remind them of their danger thereby. So that were there no other advantage attending the Preaching and Expounding the Word of God than these, yet these would be sufficient to demand our utmost reverence and attention. Let us only reflect how many errors and mistakes, incurred in the hurry of public life, would be buried in oblivion, how many private acts of Fraud and Injustice would remain unatoned for; were it not for the seasonable remonstrances of the Preacher, and the wholsom severities of the Scripture, *Extortion*, without reproof, would soon assume the name of honest Industry; and the merit of providing for

for our Families, would often supersede that of observing the Laws of God,

There are very few Vices but what men by frequent repetition with success, would easily reconcile themselves to ; and it is observable, that where they once gain admittance, it is very difficult to remove them. Nothing but the remorse of Conscience, and the terrors of an impending Judgment, can make any impression on them. And who so proper to occasion the one, and represent the other, as He to whom are committed the Oracles of God ? Those Oracles which are described unto us as " quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow ; and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." These, when all other methods prove ineffectual, when all human severities fail, frequently operate so forcibly upon the mind, that the most obdurate sinners relent ; and, however unconcerned the outward man may appear, yet the secret sting from within is too sharp and pungent not to be felt ; and the wound too deep to be healed without a proper and effectual

effectual application.—There is no man so bad as not to listen sometimes to the calls and admonitions of conscience; and however they may be stifled in the clamor and hurry of life, they are too apt to break out in the calm and cool of the day, when we should have other thoughts to entertain us. It is true indeed, the greatest Pleasures in human life are supposed to be those which attend our private and otherwise uninterrupted retirements: But where is the satisfaction of a release from worldly concerns, to reflect upon the Impurities and Defilements we have contracted from an acquaintance with them? Where are the joys of a solitary retreat, attended with the severe lashes and reproaches of Conscience? And as these are the seasons, which are the most apt to beget remorse for past offences, and to remind the sinner of his Duty; so it will be incumbent on every Preacher, at these stated times of Devotion, to use his utmost diligence in his vocation and ministry, to inform the ignorant, convince the erroneous, justify the righteous, and denounce God's Judgments on impenitent Sinners.

and brought me to believe a and the world
and to be healed without a proper and
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I shall now, by way of conclusion, observe what a natural tendency a devout and religious behavior has to make men happy here, and blessed hereafter.

The most refined Happiness in this life arises from a pleasing consciousness of a man's Integrity and Virtue: and it is observable, that nothing contributes more to the due use and improvement of them, than the Informations and Encouragements of Scripture. What eminent instances of Piety and Virtue do they exhibit? What glorious imitations have they produced? What useful lessons of instruction do they afford us for public and private life? How many have been made happy by observing them? How agreeable are they to Reason, and the circumstances of our mortal Nature? What could we have done, or how could we have been happy without them? Meer natural Reason, unassisted by Revelation, would never have been able to have sketched out to us the proper instruments of our happiness even in this life, much less have discovered to us the assurance of a glorious Immortality. From the defection of *Adam*,

so great was the darkness and corruption that ensued upon it, to the time of the day-spring of the Gospel; even the dictates of Natural Religion, that is, what was admitted amongst the purest forms of Worship, was in fundry instances repugnant to Reason itself. Hence it is, that the Jewish and Gentile states of the world are so often stiled in Scripture by the sacred Penmen, states of Bondage. And this made it highly necessary that a new and more perfect system of Morality should be introduced. And really, considering the great perfection and excellency of the Christian Religion, to what was ever before published, together with its glorious offers of Immortality, one would think there could need no other argument to recommend it to all mankind. If there is any thing prohibited therein, which may at first sight appear disagreeable to flesh and blood; yet, upon a farther reflection, that our conformity to it will promote our final Happiness, whereas the breach of it will retard and perhaps endanger it, this should mightily excite us to submit to it. But there is no room to complain of the severities of CHRIST's Religion; the duties of Mortification,

tion, Forgiveness of Injuries, and the like, are no otherwise enjoined than as they are subservient to the true interests of Piety and Virtue, and have a constant and direct tendency to the good and interest of those who have the happiness to know, and the wisdom to observe them. What better mean of establishing the order and peace of Society, than works which flow from sincere and unaffected Virtue? What grateful returns of love follow works of Charity and Mercy?

But besides these blessings in possession, those "who hear the Word of God and keep it," have much greater in reversion. For them "is laid up a crown of righteousness," perfect Bliss, and Happiness eternal in the Heavens.

And what can be a greater encouragement to a serious and constant attendance on public worship, and a strict diligence in the performance of our Duty, than an inward peace and composure here, and a blessed state of Immortality hereafter? What considerations can be offered of greater weight to make our calling and election sure, than rewards so vastly surpassing all our expectation.

Wherefore,

Wherefore, since the practice of Christian Virtue is attended with so blessed and glorious an event ; since it is the peculiar advantage of " Godliness to have the promise " of the life that now is, and of that which " is to come ;" let it be the principal care and business of our lives to obtain it. To this purpose I would recommend a due observance of Religious Festivals ;—a frequent Use of and Meditation upon the sacred Scriptures ;—a strict and devout attendance in the House of God ;—and a particular circumspection in our worldly affairs : which duly observed, cannot fail of communicating to us that delightful experience asserted in the Text, " Yea, rather blessed are they that " *bear the Word of God and keep it.*"

The End of the First Volume.

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